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Abstract

Anna Freud famously wrote that “sex is something you do, sexuality is something you are.” (King, 2011) The act of sex and the concept of sexual identity throughout history, and into the future, will continue to be amended in regards to what is considered socially acceptable and desirable. Advances in pharmacology (birth control, Viagra), technology (vibrators), sexual politics (gay marriage), social media (sex-ting), to name only a few, continue to change the emotional and behavioral conventions around sexuality. With these various social factors influencing the already complicated and private matter of sex and sexuality, it is further challenging to understand the nature of people as users in regards to design of sexual products and services.

When considering the realm of the adult store industry, people as users, are often a hidden and an ever-moving target. Within Helsinki Finland, it is also a market mostly misunderstood and underserved by current adult store offerings. Previously unassociated with the adult store industry, I began to explore its vast offering in early 2012 in order to create a business plan for a ‘pleasure boutique’ within an entrepreneurship course. Through this process I discovered the industry to be fascinating, controversial and rapidly growing. After immersing myself in the market I felt there were many opportunities to satisfy unmet markets and customer needs through design. With the adult store industry steadily increasing and the cultural perception of sexuality evolving, the need to understand people as users is especially important for the desirability and ultimate success of my business design concepts within this industry.

To better understand how to satisfy user needs through design, this thesis focuses on creating and conducting a qualitative consumer research approach through ten extreme user interviews. It centers on two objectives, first to create a qualitative consumer research approach that more effectively investigates a taboo subject, in this case, sexuality. Creating this approach provides a ground plan on how to interview users regarding private topics, which as an outlined process, the creative industry currently lacks. To accomplish this, the methodology created utilizes a combination of existing research methods. The process draws from three fields: the user-centered realm of human factors research as well as areas of psychology and ethnography, as it relates to hidden populations and counter sub-cultures. The second aim of this thesis is to gain valuable insights through ten extreme user interviews that provide insights, inspiration and opportunities for satisfying user needs through design.

This thesis begins with an introduction into related literature regarding sexual history and a personal immersion into the adult store industry. Stemming from this observation follows the research proposal: how to create and conduct a qualitative consumer research approach that allows the investigation of a private and taboo topic. Chapter two outlines the creation of the qualitative consumer research methodology, prior to introducing the ten extreme users and their interview summary findings within chapter three. Chapter three concludes with identifying and explaining the three key user insight themes found. These include the tensions surrounding the duality of gender, the duality of self (real and ideal mental construct) and lastly, the desire for feeling a sense of intimacy and sense of love (in agape form) over the mere act and objectification of sex and sexual objects.

The fourth chapter discusses how these key insights have opened up areas of opportunity for design that will better satisfy and resonate with users in comparison to the original pleasure boutique concept. The first two opportunity areas describe how the design of visual communication could blur the lines between the genders and gender roles for a more unified concept of sexual identity. The third area focuses on the desire to ridicule the confines of social norms in regards to sexuality as a means to find liberation. This could also be embodied within the brand of the pleasure boutique and its visual communication. Lastly, the final insight discusses the opportunity for design messaging and visual communication to use elements illustrating a sense of agape love and intimacy that people ultimately desire. This area could push boundaries further by utilizing shared aspects from different religions that embody enlightenment and the sublime through aspects of agape love.

Keywords qualitative consumer research, human factors, user centered design, extreme users.

HUMAN FACTORS OF A PLEASURE BOUTIQUE

**Developing A Qualitative User Research
Approach For A Taboo Subject.**

**KATHLEEN PEKKOLA
2012 // 2013**

HUMAN FACTORS OF A PLEASURE BOUTIQUE
MASTER OF ARTS THESIS

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2013

“Pleasure is the only thing one should live for, nothing ages like happiness.”

Oscar Wilde

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01

INTRODUCTION

01.1 A QUICKIE IN HISTORY

There's an old American adage, it goes something like this: when engaging in conversation at dinner parties, always avoid the topics of religion, politics and especially, sex.

Sex, I have found, even prior to considering my thesis topic, has the ability to both excite and engage people in discussion, or cause a heated debate that quickly divides people against one another. The topic and the act of sex itself (in its many forms) has the potential to both unite and divide people. Throughout human history sex has been used as a tool of peace and weapon of war. Religion, and in turn politics, have imposed a long-standing sense of shame and guilt around sex and sexuality that is still present today. Although the western world has become accustomed to highly sexualized entertainment and advertising, this illicitness is juxtaposed with the fact that sex, as even pure discussion, is still a cultural taboo for many.

01.1.1 HYSTERIA - SHIFTING SOCIAL PARADIGMS

In the mid-nineteenth century Anna Freud famously wrote that "sex is something you do, sexuality is something you are." Sexuality norms are, of course, defined by your culture. Cultures continually define what is acceptable to do and be sexually, including when, where, how and how often. This type of prescription, often strict and punishable by death at times, is destined to lead to personal tensions that people experience daily. Yesterday, today and

tomorrow we continually change what is the 'normal' frequency and manner of sex between individuals as well as what is sexually desirable physically, emotionally and in regards to orientation.

Since the first sexual revolution originating in London around the late 1800's the western world has experienced many different cultural and industrial movements advancing what the general public deems acceptable. (Dabhoiwala, 2012) Western culture has steadily outgrown customs and progressed into various avenues of sexuality. Advances in pharmacology (birth control, Viagra), technology (vibrators), sexual politics (gay marriage), social media (sexting), to name only a few, have changed the attitudes and social norms related sexuality. Probably the most notable phenomenon is the social influence of the television show *Sex and the City*. The popularity of this show help to revolutionize the mass perception of how modern day women are perceived to discuss and engage in sex and relationships. This show had such a profound social influence that one episode airing in 1998, *The Turtle and The Hare*, generated a huge unexpected increase in sales for the adult store industry that is still felt today. Utilizing the most conservative and agreeable character within the show, Charlotte, the episode features her initial uneasiness when first introduced to a vibrator. By the end of the episode she is addicted to the *Rampant Rabbit* vibrator made by Virbatex.

The prude and endearing character, Charlotte, acts as a social official via celebrity. Her figure granted viewers permission to explore this area of sexuality. This episode made it permissible for the masses to explore the adult store industry and its world of products. If Charlotte can like it, I must like it! Sure enough, Vibratex sold millions of the *Rampant Rabbit* model after the episode airing in 1998. With many adult stores embracing the immergence of online shopping, the access of a more private adult store experience strengthened the industry even further. By 2004, when *Sex and the City* aired its last season, sexual norms within western culture had been influenced to the point where it is now common practice for educated urban women to discuss sexuality openly and purchase sexual products for personal and shared pleasure. By this time, there were also already a handful of luxury adult toy manufacturers, erotic lingerie brands and upscale adult store retailers catering to this need throughout major cities in the USA and Europe. It has been a growing industry supplying increasing demands, despite economic hardships.

Even by 1917, there were more vibrators than toasters in American homes. Although they were dubbed as 'health and beauty aids' what they were actually used for is anyone's guess. Today, the desire for adult toys is relatively equal amongst men and women of different sexual orientations, the only difference being women purchasing them earlier in life than men. Forty-five million women (52.5% of women), ages 18-60 in the US alone use vibrators. Additionally, the use of these vibrators is not a solo activity. Of these women, 77.9% of them use vibrators with their partner. Even more interesting is how as many 25 year old men as 60 year old men are buying vibrators across the USA. This is evidence that adult products are an issue of psychographics, not demographics. JimmyJane, an award winning adult toy manufacturer, proves this point further by reporting that their USA sales are proportionate to population densities. (Imboden 2012)

01.2 SEX SELLS

Today, the sex toy market within the USA accounts for over \$2 billion in sales annually that has steadily grown 5-10% each year in the past decade. The popularity of one erotic novel, *Fifty Shades of Grey*, could help this exceed standard to 15% for 2012. This erotic novel has been the number one seller in many countries for consecutive weeks including the USA, UK and Finland. (Business Week 2012) *Fifty Shades of Grey* has sold over 5.3 million copies and is the best selling book in the UK since records began. (Singh 2012) While many within the adult store industry find this to be watered down "mummy porn" when it comes

to the breadth of erotic novels, the story has pushed public perceptions and provided an increase in sex-cessories within the adult industry. More specifically sex-cessories that were previously considered more daring and taboo, such as bondage tape and leather riding crops. Fans of the novel have helped transform sales the adult toy industry in unexpected ways in order recreate their own narrative experience of *Fifty Shades of Grey*. One popular adult store in NYC, Babeland, noted sales of bondage gear increasing by 375% in one month due to the novel. (Babeland 2012) The increase in adult toys and BDSM* products should only increase further once the novel is finally presented as a blockbuster film. The acceleration of mainstream acceptance of more risqué sexual practices, such as the items listed above, can even be found at the most traditional institutions including Ivy league colleges like Yale, Harvard and MIT. These universities, among others, now offer official “Munch Groups” where so inclined students may gather to discuss their “affinity for kinky sex.” (Miraval 2012) It is clear that with many so many different social influences like these Ivy League university groups to *Fifty Shades of Grey* and the vibrator episode of *Sex and the City*, that there is a growing enthusiasm and progressive demand for adult products. The industry has steadily increased as a response, leading to much competition and a variety of needs to be satisfied. It is also an industry where design has yet to flourish, with only a small number of adult products and stores positioned as ‘design centric’, such as JimmyJane and LELO toys.

01.2.1 CERBERUS: THE THREE HEADS OF THE ADULT STORE MARKET

Previously unconnected to this industry, there was much immersion and research to do. After exploring a variety of adult stores, in-store and online within the USA, Finland and Berlin it is apparent that while it is a steadily growing industry it is still an industry that is mostly populated by extremes. Amidst a vast array of products and skus your adult store experience is likely to be one of three: the dark and shady man-in-trench coat experience (that most often comes to mind), the wild and novel funhouse, or a slightly more tame version that takes a female friendly position. Each seems to have their place with a particular consumer type yet many rely on a shock and awe strategy. However, from a design perspective, the cultural relevance of most adult store brands and the consumer journey of most adult stores have not been considered. With so many cultural influences changing what is acceptable and ideal in relation to sex, sexuality and gender people as users are a complicated and ever changing target to cater towards. This is why conducting interviews with extreme users, from outsiders to early adopters, is key in understanding how to create an adult store experience that is currently culturally relevant and truly resonates with consumer values.



01 KELTAINEN RUUSU
HELSINKI



02 FUN FACTORY
BERLIN



03 GOOD VIBRATIONS
SAN FRANCISCO

* BDSM - a variety of erotic practices involving different combinations of bondage, discipline, dominance, submission, sadism and masochism within role-playing and other interpersonal dynamics.

01.3 THESIS MOTIVATION

In the summer of 2012 while enrolled in an entrepreneurship course I created a new venture concept called *VBoutique*, a pleasure boutique (adult store), aiming to provide a sophisticated and positive experience to help users explore their sexuality and pleasure, helping to build their self-confidence. While working on this business plan, I was also working on two design projects that involved conducting qualitative consumer research. These projects furthered my interest in ethnography and the importance of human factors (user-centered research) work within design. Inspired by both the opportunity within the adult store industry and my experience with consumer research, I decided to combine these two interests for my thesis.



V PLEASURE BOUTIQUE BRAND



WEBSITE AND ONLINE STORE

01.4 RESEARCH QUESTION & PURPOSE

With a design research and entrepreneurial background, it was important to push the initial business concept of V Boutique further through valuable qualitative research. With so many social influences affecting sexual culture, and the adult industry as result, it is critical to continually understand users within this market. This includes understanding their values, behavioral drivers and cultural tensions they experience regarding sexuality. By understanding the common themes within these areas among different extreme users, as a designer and entrepreneur, I will have a stronger foundation to build a successful adult store experience and brand. Ideally, one that truly resonates with users values and beliefs and alleviates the cultural tensions the experience in regards to sexuality and their sense of self.

Given the taboo and sensitive nature of my topic, it was necessary to develop a refined method of researching users regarding a taboo subject, like sex, beyond the standard practices and tools currently used within the design community. With this, my primary research questions is:

How might I conduct a qualitative consumer research approach that allows me to investigate the private and taboo relationship of sexual pleasure and self-confidence to create a more desirable adult store?

With this research question, this thesis project involves two aspects:

First, with developing a qualitative consumer research approach that would allow me to better investigate a taboo area, like sexuality, with users. To do so, I draw from three different existing fields. Starting initially from the quick natured and user-centered research approach of the field of human factors. Secondly, considering the rapport and trust building practices within the field of psychology. Lastly, drawing from the field of ethnography, as it relates sourcing, researching and trust building with hard-to-reach populations.

Second, involves the execution of this research approach by sourcing and conducting in-context interviews with ten 'extreme' users. The findings collected from these ten interviews will be synthesized into common insight findings. From these insights, I will identify and discuss areas of opportunity for design to provide solutions that will create an adult store service and brand that is more desirable and further resonates with my potential users in comparison to my initial concept.

01.5 ASSUME THE POSITION: RESEARCHER

With a background in design management, I have gained experience in developing brand strategies and retail experiences that are based on qualitative consumer research of extreme users. While pursuing my masters in International Design Business Management I have also developed skills for creating and using design research methods and human factors approaches including recruiting user respondents, interviewing in-context and synthesizing 'in-field' research data to theme insights in order to develop creative concepts. To expand my toolkit of creating and conducting field research through extreme user interviews I gathered advice from my thesis advisor, ethnographer, Jack Whalen, as well as a human factors expert, Esteve Pannetier. Combining my design background and initial human factors experience with the counsel of consumer research experts and literature, I aim to, in IDBM fashion, straddle the role of designer and researcher.

02

CREATING A RESEARCH METHOD FOR THE TABOO

2.1 METHODOLOGIES COMBINED

With taboo and private topics like sex and sensual pleasure, the existing methods within design research do not clearly outline ways to approach investigating such sensitive topics. There is no existing method within the creative community that clearly outlines how to source private or hard-to-find interviewees, such as sex addicts or abstinent priests, nor how to tackle the interviewing process around a taboo and private subject like sexual pleasure services. This issue has been confirmed when consulting with industry contacts from 358, Proctor & Gamble and Ziba. Additionally, within human factors conferences while aspects of this issue are discussed, the development of clear process has yet to be formally addressed. With this, I have developed a qualitative consumer research approach that incorporates three different existing fields: human factors, ethnography and psychology. By incorporating existing methods from these three areas a design researcher is, firstly, better equipped to source hard-to-find interviewees around sensitive topics. Secondly, is better able to understand how to build the necessary trust and rapport, beyond standard user interviews. Gaining this trust and rapport with extreme users strengthens the process of researching around taboo subjects and allows the researcher to more aptly uncover and identify the feelings and drivers of a consumer base. Building these tools is key in ultimately uncovering sincere answers and insights that will inspire design solutions.



2.1.1 HUMAN FACTORS METHODS

With my past experience and future interest in working as a user-centered design researcher, my methodology primarily utilizes practices from the field of human factors. What is described as human factors may also be called, empathic research, user-centered design research, ergonomics or commercial ethnography. This field spans many disciplines including psychology, engineering, design, statistics and operations research. This field is concerned with the experience between the user, equipment and environment, or, in other words, adapting design to people. (Pannetier, 2012) Differing from the fields of ethnography and psychology, human factors research is a field that lives within an industry of more rapid timelines and viewing people more specifically as users and consumers. The goal of this type of research is discover insights that provoke areas of design opportunity. Its research findings are used to inspire an experience design that goes beyond product and service functions and benefits. Human factors ideally helps to discover what is desirable in order to create game changing innovation. (Pannetier, 2012)

In practice, human factors utilizes methods derived partly from ethnography that are observational and qualitative in nature. The observational method includes observing “real-world” environments in order to understand the users’ complete experience, pressures and use of devices (products and services) and environments (in-store and online). This practice of observation of users in-context is useful because it challenges the design researchers’

assumptions (that are often incomplete or wrong) of users needs, desires and behaviors. Observing users in-context can illustrate how users experience a given environment, product or service, as well as show what they find desirable, enjoyable and valuable. It is also a research process best utilized within the early stages of design. (Pannetier, 2012) Adopting this method of working through my educational and work experience has changed my perception of design, in that it should always be co-created through this initial observation and furthered later with discussion and ideation testing. This observational method was first utilized in the beginning of my research phase when developing the business plan for V Boutique. Playing the role of researcher, I frequented every adult store within Helsinki, Portland Oregon and two popular locations within New York City and Berlin. I observed the space experience, product offering, service, branding, communication and customers within the given locations. This initial observation helped me further understand the market landscape and typical consumer based on the type of adult store.

Focus groups and interviews are another form of qualitative research within this field that includes observation and also elicits the discussion of opinions, attitudes, behaviors and personal experiences in relation to a given subject. Conducting interviews in-context can provide users with a familiar environment to facilitate trust, memory recall and physical demonstrations to describe opinions and beliefs when discussing topics related to the given environment, product or service. (Pannetier 2012) As a way to gain more extreme perspectives, human factors researchers often diversify their interviewees not only by demographic criteria but psychographic criteria that is considered extreme. For example, this could include 'insiders' who are very knowledgeable and passionate about a product or service that may even self-create a product or service to appease their personal needs or be early to adopt a new radical offerings within a market. At the opposite extreme are often described as 'outsiders', people who dislike or aren't even users or aware of a given product or service. Interviewing users that are 'extreme' in this sense is a method of gaining insights from both sides of the consumer bell curve. This is much more effective in gaining perspectives that are radical versus interviewing an average user.

To expand on my past experience with observing and conducting user interviews, I received counsel from Helsinki-based human factors expert from IDEO and 358, Esteve Pannetier. This aided the development of my human factors interviewing tools that included creating an interview question guide to prepare and guide me through each interview. (appendix 2) Secondly, a creative kit comprised of visual references from adult store locations, online shops, products, branding and communication related the adult store industry as well as unrelated service industries. (appendix 3) Lastly, was the creation of a debrief template to be utilized immediately after each interview to record key insights, ideas and further questions. (appendix 4) These items were in addition to interview notes, selective use of audio, video and photos.

Additionally, this research project refers to the respected user-centered research Method Cards created by the leading user-centered design consultancy, IDEO. Key methods cards from this set include: fly on the wall, extreme user interviews, rapid ethnography, the five whys?, developing character profiles, image collage, conceptual landscape, foreign correspondents.

These various methods of human factors research help to first, facilitate an empathetic understanding of users. Secondly, these methods act as a way to conduct field research in a more rapid manner, in comparison to more thorough and time intensive ethnographic fieldwork. The implementation and practice of these in-context observations and interview methods is explained in detail in section 2.2, along with the methods utilized from the fields of ethnography and psychology.

2.1.2 ETHNOGRAPHY METHODS

While ethnography contains many different schools of thought, it can simply be defined as:

“The study of people in naturally occurring settings or “field” by methods of data collection which capture their social meanings and ordinary activities, involving the research participating directly in the setting, if not also the activities, in order to collect data in a systematic manner.” (Brewer 2000)

Attempting to draw from only a small part of the field of ethnography, my research method will draw from the ethnography-based aspects of observing people through interaction in the context of their environment while collecting and recording data.

Additionally, through my literature review of ethnography-based texts, I also became familiar with a recruiting approach known as snowball sampling. This was vital in my recruiting process, as it is a useful method for sourcing difficult to reach or hidden populations. Snowball sampling can be placed within a wider set of link-tracing methodologies (Spreen, 1992) which seek to take advantage of the social networks of identified respondents to provide a researcher with an ever-expanding set of potential contacts. (Thomson, 1997) In practice, research subjects are found when one subject gives the researcher the name of another subject, who then provides the name of a third and so on. (Vogt, 1999) It is an ‘informal’ method used best in studying subjects in an explorative and qualitative manner, such as this project. (Hendrick, Blanken and Adriaans, 1992) The main benefit of snowball sampling is in the ‘chain referral’ of respondents that can instill ‘insider’ characteristics upon the researcher. This helps to facilitate an entry point to people and settings that conventional approaches could probably not reach or be welcomed with warm regard.

Establishing the trust of my respondents, given my thesis topic, was essential in finding willing and open respondents. This method provided an entry point and initial foundation of trust that should be built further throughout the interview by guiding the questions as appropriate in a non-coercive and non-judgmental manner. With this approach a designer is able to uncover aspects of extreme users’ social experiences that otherwise would have been difficult to find through conventional methods, such as hiring potential respondents. All of my subjects were found through this process stemming from a chain of 2-6 sources.

In addition to the actual interview preparation and documentation that draws from ethnography, the importance of analysis is also considered. As asserted by Forsythe it is stated that collecting data is not enough. “Understanding and analyzing the data about what is happening in the context is the core of ethnographic fieldwork.” (Forsythe, 1999) That being said, the main objective of my research is to theme my data into insights in order to explore the meanings and implications to ultimately design a relevant and desired experience that relates to users values and behavioral drivers.

2.1.3 PSYCHOLOGY

Within the field of psychology, this research project draws from client-practitioner rapport and trust building practices used in the more sensitive psychological issues of sexual dysfunctions and abuse. As mentioned, the method of chain referral offers an entry point and an initial foundation of trust within interviewing. Prior to each interview, each respondent was aware of the thesis research intentions, final outcome and timeline. The use of any personal information was discussed and agreed upon prior to the interview and was reiterated at the end.

Due to the private nature of my topic, all interviews were conducted individually face-to-

face. In-person interviews allowed for a more intimate experience and passage way for starting a relationship. I was able to catch all the involuntary reactions and emotions that would otherwise be lost if I were requesting a survey or questionnaire. Diverting eyes, looks of disgust and blushing cheeks yields far more information than the verbal answer itself.

The interviews were also preformed in-context to the users environment or preferred location as a way to increase trust. (The in-context environments are explained in greater detail in the section below.) This helped with collecting relevant data by increasing their memory recall of relevant issues and past experiences, facilitated demonstrations and story telling examples.

In order to build the initial trust and relationship further from referral, I approached my respondents as a curious equal and less of an official researcher. This democratic manner between researcher and respondent is a similar approach to how a psychologist would deal with a patient regarding a personal and shameful issue. My status as a student also often helped this. Each interviewee was reminded of my purpose, desired outcome, and timeline at the start of my interview. Another psychology approach in helping respondents feel more comfortable was stating clearly and genuinely that they were free to disclose as much information as they were comfortable with and that there were no wrong answers to my questions. (Lefebvre 1997) They were reminded that I was looking for inspiration over data.

Within the interview process, it was important to adopt a similar demeanor as a psychologist meeting with a client regarding a sexual issue. It was necessary to be consistent in my mood, communication and behavior. While asking questions and listening I focused on maintaining eye contact, actively listening and continually focusing on the present moment. Additionally, they were allowed to see my interview guide and notes as they were written. I avoided making the experience too formal and structured, while trying to navigate the interview through the interview question guide. Overall, I tried to avoid the pressure and desire to collect data and facts. Instead, it was more beneficial to remain present in the conversation with each respondent, listening thoughtfully to what they offered to share. This bettered the attempt in understanding each 'user' as a person and their perspectives around sexuality, self-confidence and identity.

2.2 **METHODOLOGY IN PRACTICE**

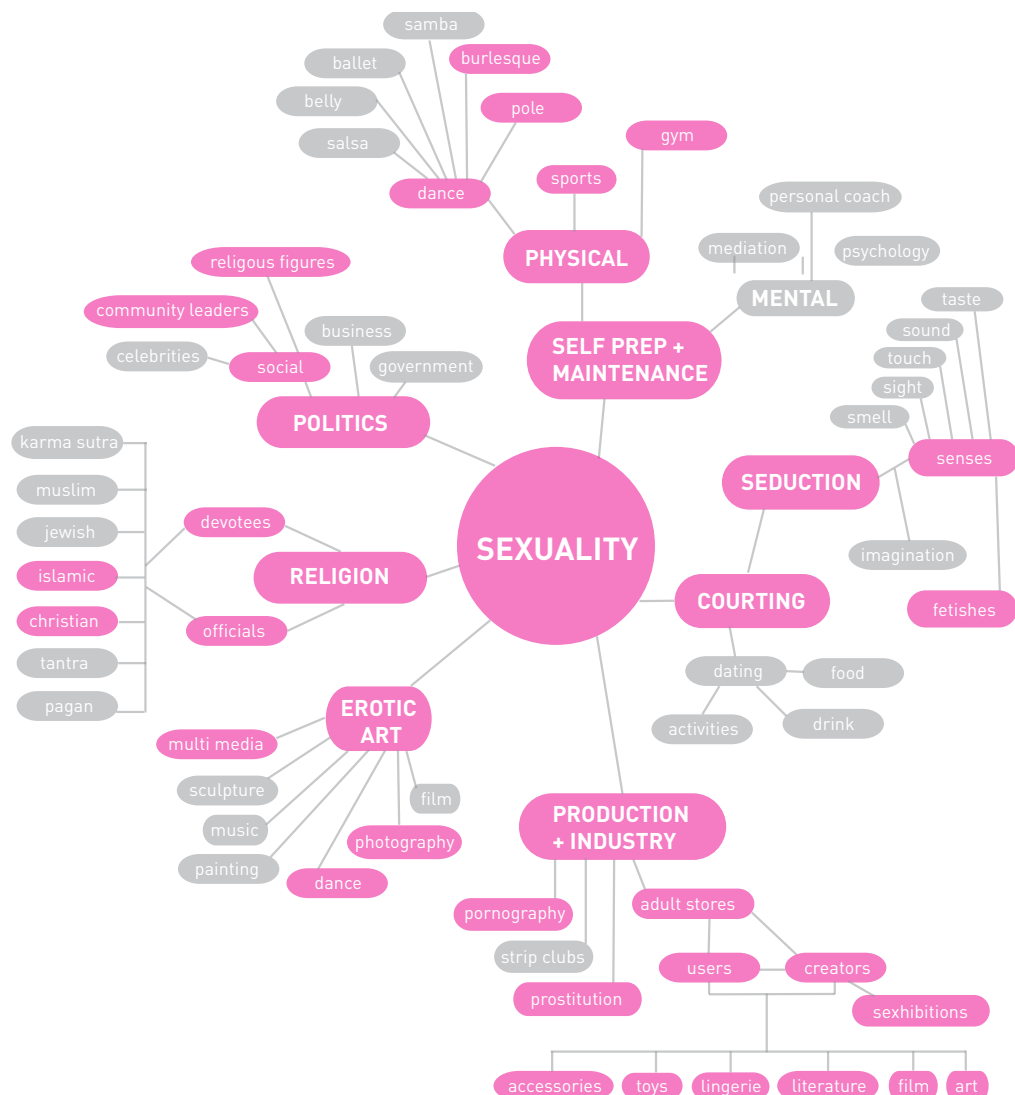
With the applicable practices from these three fields selected, a qualitative user research approach for investigating the taboo is explained below with the main steps of the methodology outlined below.

RESEARCH PROCESS OUTLINE	
01	DEFINE RESEARCH CONTEXT
02	DEVELOP RECRUITMENT SCALES
03	ENGAGE IN SNOWBALL SAMPLING
04	DEVELOP INTERVIEW GUIDE - ADAPT TO EACH RESPONDENT
05	DEVELOP CREATIVE KIT
06	CONDUCT AND DOCUMENT INTERVIEWES
07	DEBRIEF & FOLLOW UP WITH RESPONDENTS
08	ANALYZE INSIGHTS & THEMES

By incorporating the existing methods into the process outlined above, a design researcher is, firstly, better equipped to source hard-to-find interviewees around sensitive topics. Secondly, is better able to understand how to build the necessary trust and rapport, beyond standard user interviews. Gaining this trust and rapport with extreme users strengthens the process of researching around taboo subjects and thirdly, allows the researcher to more aptly uncover and identify key insights regarding the values and drivers of a consumer base. Exercising and cultivating these methods is advantageous for a design researcher, as it eases the challenges of not only finding hidden users, but also uncovering sincere answers and insights that will inspire design solutions.

2.2.1 DEFINING CONTEXTS

Before beginning with any interviews, it was necessary to define the areas of context to interview within. These areas of context would then define potential extreme user respondents that should be sourced. Given that the initial adult store concept focused on offering a sophisticated 'pleasure boutique' experience that would help users explore their sexuality and help to build a sense of self-confidence. With this intent, the mind map below was created in order to define the aspects of sexuality in relation to self-confidence. This includes a wide range of areas from the intersecting history with religion and politics, erotic art, the adult store industry, to the more personal aspects of users' physical and mental preparation and maintenance, or lack there of, involved in courting and seducing. The interviewees in this this project come from the various areas highlighted below.



2.2.2 RECRUITING

Additionally, mapping the areas of sexuality allowed for further diversity in the pool of potential user respondents. Given that adult toys purchases come from a range of demographics, as mentioned earlier, this research project was concerned with searching for a range of psychographic criteria between a cast of ten user respondents. To assist in diversifying the psychographic criteria, it was necessary to define a set of psychographic extremes for appropriate recruitment. This is another method drawing from the field of human factors.

These recruitment scales shown in the table below include: the user's level of sexual explicitness from secretive to explicit, sociosexual restrictiveness (casual sexual behavior from abstinent to promiscuous), familiarity with adult products and stores from novices to experts/fanatics, the user's predilection towards sex from hating to loving, addicted to indifferent, feelings relating to the nature of sex as being 'bad' or 'good', as well as opinions related to the human body being 'bad' or 'good'. The use of 'bad' and 'good' relate to the users' opinions and/or feelings around sex or the human body being shameful or disgraceful.

Referring to the sexuality map, I focused on the areas of the industry: adult industry experts, adult toy fanatics, sexual arts and dance: pole dancing and burlesque, sexual restriction (or lack there of): religious figures and followers, sexual seduction: users concerned with grooming their physical appearance, and finally fetishes: either professionals or enthusiasts.



In developing these scales of psychographic criteria helps to define the extreme attributes to search for by respondent. Given the scales above, it was important to, first, look for users of different extremes in more than one of these areas, and secondly, within different areas of context given the sexuality map. For example, one of my respondents, Leo, is not an extreme in regards to being explicit or secretive about sex in conversation, but is very knowledgeable about adult stores and products, who loved engaging in sex and who positively viewed sex and the human body as 'good' – meaning Leo, did not associate much, if any, shame regarding these issues. These scales are illustrated for each respondent as they are introduced in the following chapter.

With the contexts and recruiting scales defined, it was then possible to engage in the snowball sampling process. Employing the help of friends and colleagues for potential extremes I also started placing myself within settings unaccustomed to my existing lifestyle. In order to recruit interviewees from the areas of context described earlier, I explored a range of locations and events from church sermons and prayer groups to adult stores, a porn magazine event and BDSM parties. The more immersed in the areas highlighted within the mind map visual the easier it became to socialize and connect on a common ground with potential interviewees and go deeper with chain referrals. This process was successful in leading to sourcing ten varying user types that are introduced in the next chapter: Entering a Field of Extremes.

2.2.3 INTERVIEW GUIDE

While beginning the efforts of snowball sampling, I developed a general interview guide that would assist in guiding the approximate 90-120 minute interviews. The interview guide (appendix 2) first prepares the design researcher by outlining the purpose of the interview and lists key interviewing tactics to remember before beginning the discussion of a taboo subject. Secondly, the interview guide starts with a briefing of the design project, in this case, an overview of this thesis project – its method, purpose, timeline and intended audience. To encourage sharing and enthusiasm of the interviewee it should be affirmed that the researcher is was interested in them as a means of finding inspiration, not data and facts. Lastly, the main purpose of the interview guide tool is a gradual list of questions from general to more personal.

After the discussion of confidentiality, rapport was established by gradually getting to know the respondent on a personal level before proceeding with my key questions. Knowing that time is a factor in building in trust, each interview was started in a casual manner allowing respondents to tell me about their day, themselves and background. This helped established a sense of commonality, as often there were comments I could relate to. This helped form more intimacy in order to build a sense of trust. Then gradually the least sensitive questions were asked while bridging into more sensitive personal questions. This reduced discomfort for both myself and the interviewees in order to uncover valuable information by making more personal topics seem natural. The order and types of questions asked varied from interview to interview. This was gauged on the natural flow of conversation and inquiries best related to the users lifestyle. Easing into discussions through bridging questions and answers helped to minimize awkwardness as well as maximize permission seeking. (Lefebvre, 1997, 27) While I could never assume their trust or fully comprehend their feelings and experiences, much like a counselor, I attempted to. Through this I maintained flexibility with the interview times, locations, privacy preferences and overall conversation flow. Through these efforts I was able to build further trust to better understand my interviewees as much as possible given my short time with them.



Overall, the respondents seemed to enjoy the process. Especially, as some questions seemed to prompt strong memories and emotions that they either enjoyed remembering or were interested to ponder further. With respondents sharing such an intimate part of themselves through personal stories and opinions, it was like they were experiencing past events once again. They opened up a side of themselves that seemed to be seldom visited; a side grouped with feelings from nostalgia, shame, guilt, pleasure and joy.

In the case with one interviewee, Orvokki, prompted her to recall hurtful memories and was reduced to tears within the interview. This was a very sudden and surprising moment that called upon me as a researcher to act accordingly by slowing the discussion and making sure to respond with compassion but without signs of pity or judgment for her past circumstances. This was an example of the risks involved with approaching such a provocative subject. In this instance, I was straddling the position of being sympathetic to my respondent's emotional state while gently coaxing the respondent to the main subject. While this research approach provides a method for addressing taboo topics, it should be mentioned that the researcher's emotional intelligence and conversational tact is as critically important when interviewing respondents.

Despite lacking the luxury of time to build trust as in the case of client and practitioner, it was easier having the status of being a student, a young woman, for both male and female respondents alike. I have also found that it is sometimes easier for people to confide in a total stranger about personal issues instead of a friend or spouse that is more likely to judge or turn it into a personal issue. In the words of one of my respondents Daniel, a priest: "Sometimes strangers can in fact be the best at keeping secrets."

2.2.4 CREATIVE KIT

The development and use of a creative kit was another key element in my interviewing process. Within user-centered research it is common practice to create what is often called a creative kit or probes. This is a kit of visuals and/or objects that relate to the topic of discussion in order to provoke and facilitate discussion. The idea behind the creative kit is commonly used amongst human factors practitioners. It is a tool often helpful in uncovering user insights when conducting qualitative consumer research. This is especially necessary when interviewing subjects out of context, as it helps make a visual association to respond to. For eight of the ten interviews the creative kit (appendix 3) was used as a means to further conversation, mainly for four interviews that were conducted out of context and within a public place due privacy issues, convenience for the user and/or lack of available environment.

The creative kit is comprised of a variety of printed images, shown in appendix 3, that include adult store benchmarks, both in-store and online, such as Helsinki's popular Keltainen Ruusu, female friendly Shebop and New York City's well known and more trendy chain, Babeland. The kit also included related products from these stores from upscale lingerie to adult accessories. The range of products and experiences from low brow to high brow were presented to each respondent to respond to. They were asked to describe what they liked and disliked about each location and why. This encouraged opinions about experience design, service design, branding and past experiences and expectations.

Additionally, with consumers engaging with dozens of service types, it can be assumed that in-store experiences are compared with unrelated industry experiences. Similarly, website experiences could be compared to popular unrelated sites like Amazon, Google, Facebook etc. Since consumers are beginning to apply expectations from other categories, it is beneficial to look outside the adult industry experience for ideas, as some of the greatest

service innovations come not from inventing something new but applying principles from successful players in an unrelated category. It would be interesting to spot similarities in service expectations despite category differences, and translate the successful approach to a new context. To evaluate touch points beyond the adult store industry, visual references that blur the lines between industries were used in order to push ideas further. This included a few different services from different industries that deliver experiences in a unique way within their respected industries including Finnair, Apple, Love Joule (world's first female masturbation bar in Tokyo). If users had a favorite service or product, the use of an iPad was beneficial in reviewing examples online with respondents when necessary.

2.2.5 DOCUMENTATION

All interviews included note taking and audio recording for the use of recalling user statements. Most respondents preferred that these audio recordings not be released and only used as a source for data recall. Due to the private and personal nature of my interviews most respondents also declined the use of video and photos of themselves. With these issues of confidentiality and my thesis document being available to the general public, a release form was created for each interviewee to sign. It outlined the specific permissions granted by each interviewee. (appendix 1) The contents of the release form were discussed prior and reiterated after each interview. My notes, insights and ideas collected from each interview were transcribed to a debriefing template, omitting any confidential names and facts.

2.2.6 DEBRIEFING & INSIGHT THEMES

An important aspect within qualitative research, as in the case of ethnographic field work, is debriefing immediately after each interview to synthesis notes, interesting facts, user statements, key findings and interesting ideas from the user related to the creative kit. As shown in the debrief example (appendix 4), the findings, insights and key ideas were summarized. This included notes about their emotional profile and behaviors related to sexuality, area of self-confidence building and adult stores, as well as their responses and ideas after viewing the creative kit contents.

Having a debrief capture for each interview was helpful in reviewing and referring back through each interview to identify differences and common themes with each user. This helped to gather the various insights recorded in order to synthesis these into the insight themes discussed in the later portion of chapter 3. By having insight themes defined, a design researcher can then propose areas of opportunities for design to address. This method makes it easier to conduct brainstorming sessions that will better lead to desirable and feasible concepts. This is a process used in various forms within design thinking companies and consultancies such as IDEO, Ziba and Procter & Gamble.

2.3 PROCESS & PURPOSE

2.3.1 SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

The eight steps within this research approach share many similarities with qualitative consumer research processes found within different design thinking organizations such as IDEO, Ziba and Procter & Gamble. From past working experience, this process was able to draw from the different aspects they share such as techniques regarding immersion, in-context observation, extreme user interviews and insight theming. The research approach outlined within this thesis is different in that it specifically addresses the gap of two key

issues that are not clearly outlined within the creative community. Firstly, is offering an understanding and example of how to source hard-to-reach and privately accessed populations. While design thinking companies like Procter & Gamble and consultancies like 358 and IDEO sometimes consult consumers by referral instead of advertising for extreme users to interview this thesis project puts a more specific term to the process: snowball sampling. While it draws from ethnography it is term useful in adopting to the creative community more specifically. Additionally, this thesis process shows how this is useful in reaching hidden populations in comparison to more mass population of users around more generic products and services.

Secondly, this process includes how to specifically prepare and conduct an extreme user interviews of a taboo subject that has yet to be clearly outlined within the creative community. Overall, this process should serve as a starting guide and toolkit for a designer wishing to research users related to more private and personal products, services or of a hard-to-reach populations.

2.3.2 PURPOSE & PROSPECT

Before each interview the research purpose was reinforced when reviewing the discussion guide created. (Appendix 2). The discussion guide tool refreshes the position of being a design researcher by listing the specific intent of the research purpose before beginning each interview. In this project case the purpose was to first, explore what tensions the users experienced in life around sexuality. Secondly, was to explore the users' relationship around sexuality and self-confidence. By exploring these areas specifically, the intent was to discover opportunities around how, as a designer, I could better develop a pleasure boutique experience and brand that could alleviate the shared tensions felt among users. Through discussion the personal tensions around sexuality and self-confidence with ten different and dynamic individuals, I was hoping to gain inspiration to create an experience with and for people that were currently misunderstood and understood within the adult store market.

Through this process and project example, it also serves the purpose of satisfying a knowledge gap within the creative community regarding how to recruit more private sources and facilitate a more forthright discussion to better gain honest answers and inspiration from.

With this methodology and tools explained, the 10 extreme users will now be introduced within chapter 3. The use of legal names and photos of certain respondents is by their permission. To maintain the anonymity of the other respondents by their request, alias names are used.

03

COURTING A FIELD OF EXTREMES

3.1 EXTREME USERS INTRODUCED

From the beginning of November through early December 2012 I had the fortune to meet and become inspired by the different opinions and lifestyles of ten very different people. To the right is reference list of the ten interviewees and their relevance as users. The relevance draws from the highlighted areas of context within in the sexuality map presented within the last chapter. All respondents were sourced from these highlighted areas. Given the month timeline to interview my respondents I was unable to interview certain desirable candidates due to scheduling and some that were introduced by further chain referrals too late in my project process. Many referrals where not interviewed as they did not possess the extreme attributes outlined within my psychographic recruitment scales. Respondents were specifically sourced because they fulfilled the different context areas of sexuality and the extremes outlined within the recruitment scales.

The first respondent is Bernice, a very explicit young woman and adult product enthusiast originally from Brazil. Janne, is the industry expert within this group, acting as the longest running employee at Helsinki's popular adult store Keltainen Ruusu. Leo is also a unique respondent in that he is an avid pole dancer and also considers regarding himself as pansexual and transgender, engaging in dual identities of Leo and Lili. He is very knowledgeable about the adult stores within Helsinki and adult products. Referred by Leo, is Bettie Blackheart, a professional burlesque dancer and organizer of Helsinki's annual Burlesque Festival.

After being invited to a launch party for a new porn magazine through a chain of referrals,

I met one of the founders, Sophie, who acts as editor in chief in addition to being featured within the magazine. Through a related chain of referrals, I was introduced to Orvokki, one of the most interesting respondents. She had worked as a dominatrix and was now performing as a bondage artist. In addition to her professions, she fulfilled other extremes of being extremely explicit as well as uninterested in engaging in sex. By placing myself within environments atypical to my current lifestyle, I met Daisy, a German fine art photographer interested in the erotic nature of the human body form. Towards the other extremes of secretiveness, little to no adult store and product knowledge, as well as religious sexual abstinence are Kevin, Hurmat and Daniel. Kevin is a very devout Christian American who is an avid cross-fit athlete and gym owner as well as a doctor. He is extreme in the aspects of loving sex as long as it is after marriage and in the effort to become closer to God with one's partner. His devoutness to God is paralleled with his dedication to maintaining his physical appearance and strength through fitness. Maintaining his physical self is another way he attempts to bring himself closer to God. His aspirations towards the ideal image he has created of himself are similar to the ideals of Hurmat, a devout Islamic young man who believes his abstinence from sex, among other pleasures, will make him a better human being. Finally, Daniel, is extreme in that he has never engaged in sex given his pursuit towards becoming a priest. The remainder of this chapter introduces each respondent in more detail with the insights obtained from their interviews.

3.2 EXTREME USER PROFILES

To better illustrate each extreme user I've created overview profiles for each. The profiles include an initial brief capture of the user including their name, basic info, lifestyle details and where they fall within the recruitment scales I created. This will help to show the range of users within my research. The interviewee's insights and contributing ideas are then discussed with representational quotes that capture the underlying insight. The shared insights gained from the collective interviews are summarized as final insight themes.

INTERVIEWEES



BÈRNICE

EXPLICIT ENTHUSIAST



JANNE

INDUSTRY EXPERT



LEO

TRANS-GENDER
PAN SEXUAL
POLE DANCER



**BETTIE
BLACKHEART**

PROFESSIONAL
BURLESQUE DANCER



ORVOKKI

EX-DOMINATRIX
BONDAGE PERFORMER



SOPHIE

PORN MAGAZINE
FOUNDER



DAISY

BODY FORM
PHOTOGRAPHER



HURMAT

SEXUALLY SECRETIVE
ABSTINENT ISLAMIST



DANIEL

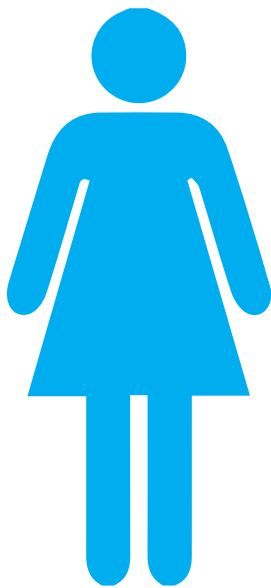
ABSTINENT
PRIEST



KEVIN

DEVOUT CHRISTIAN
AGAINST PRE-MARITAL SEX

BERNICE



BÈRNICE		
29	F	Brazilian, heterosexual, Christian Works in retail sales, single, rents alone Highly sexually explicit, adult toy enthusiast
SECRETIVE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPLICIT
NEWBIE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPERT
SEX: HATES	<div><div></div></div>	LOVES
SEX: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
BODY: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
SOCIOSEXUALLY RESTRICTIVE	<div><div></div></div>	SOCIOSEXUALLY UNRESTRICTIVE
SUMMARY INSIGHTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">_ Traditional dependence vs. new age independence_ 'Woman' vs. being_ Sexy isn't comfortable_ Intimacy: pleasure with commitment_ Pleasure vs. entertainment		SUMMARY IDEAS <ul style="list-style-type: none">_ Intimacy in service_ Use of humor_ Womenhood_ Boundary pushing products_ Pleasure in all brand communication

MEETING BÈRNICE

Bérnice was introduced by a small chain of referrals stemming from a friend native to Helsinki. Coming from a very enthusiastic and open Brazilian culture, Bérnice is very extreme in her sexual explicitness from conversation, mannerisms to appearance. With a personal fondness for Finland after visiting years ago, she has now been living and working in Helsinki for almost 3 years after living in North and South America for most her life. In contrast to Finnish culture, Bérnice stands out greatly in both appearance and personality. When meeting her for the first time she wore bright lipstick, very tight, revealing and fashionable clothes. She greeted me from her apartment doorway with a cheerful wave and very loud and friendly hello that proceeded into an unanticipated hug. By the second time in seeing Bérnice, it was apparent that blushing in her presence would be a standard occurrence for both myself and strangers alike. The chain of referrals had mentioned that she had a way of using crass sexual innuendos whenever possible, if not turning every conversation into the topic of sex. She is in full agreement that she likes to 'bring the dirty out in people.' With her enthusiasm for discussing sexuality, as well as adult toys and tips, our two-hour interview time frame quickly turned into four hours.

Beyond the basic introduction into her life, the beginning of our discussion explored her favorite stores in general and moved further into her knowledge and experiences with adult toys and stores. Bérnice first introduced me to her favorite online shopping source, Colette, an online retailer offering clothing, accessories and a small selection of lifestyle products. While browsing, the site plays current music and features the latest updates on trends. Bérnice holds high regard for Colette: "Colette helps me stay current. It is the one store where I can pick one thing out of everything and I'd like it." With this, she introduced the idea of an adult store's website offering sensual music and acting as a source that curates a wide selection of pleasure products that would make for a trend setting adult store.

Preferably, for Bérnice, the service staff should also be women, as in her mind women are traditionally more warm and open than men are. She also insists that there are cultural codes preventing women from discussing certain topics, mainly bodily functions, with men. Masturbation needs being one of them. This opinion was disclosed when showing her an example of Love Joule, the world's first and only female masturbation bar that opened in Tokyo late in 2012. However, this location allows both men and women to enter. Her disapproval of the dual gender entrance inspired her to push the idea of an adult store further, in that it could act as a women's only club. She finds the traditional idea of a gentleman's club to be romantic, a place where men can be men. Bérnice thought it would be unique and appealing to offer this idea to women. She envisioned a women's club to be an environment where a women are able to speak with female friends on a 'woman-to-woman' level. It would be a physical space that could help build a sense of womanhood and female bonding.

Finding the existence of Love Joule somewhat amusing Bérnice was also reminded of other retail experiences that she found interesting and humorous. She referenced a controversially humorous, and well executed, window display for the menswear shop Philip Browne that featuring a mannequin with its pants down urinating to spell out the word 'SALE'. She thought adding 'tasteful' sense of humor into adult stores could be an interesting way to refresh an ambiguous and awkward experience.

In regards to product offering, mainly lingerie, the products should focus on pushing the imagination by being daring and purposeful. After viewing the creative kit imagery of Agent Provocateur, a leading and sometimes daring lingerie brand, she was reminded how 'weak' the products offered were, as they focus more on comfort than pushing the imagination. She states: "When there needs to be something more for seducing (lingerie, attire, toy, position, etc.), comfort is not in my mind." Bérnice believes it is beyond quality and comfort and more important to fulfill users desires through a product story or illustrating what a user's own narrative could entail.

Additionally, she stressed the importance of showing pleasure in all aspects of communication. From the feeling of the store, service and website to the models' facial expressions, poses and body types. In contrast to most underwear brands that use 'small breasted women in submissive poses with bored expressions', a store promoting pleasure should utilize curvier women in powerfully seductive poses whose facial expressions look joyful and pleased. To Bérnice, the use of lips and eye contact are the greatest tools in facial communication, especially in regards to expressing and experiencing pleasure.

“ ALL OF THE WOMEN I ADMIRE...NONE OF THEM LOOK LIKE GISELLE. I LOVE KELLY BROOKE, SALMA HEIYAK. THEY OWN IT. WHERE YOU'RE WEAK IN ONE AREA YOUR STRONG IN ANOTHER. USE WHAT YOU HAVE! WOMEN ARE NOT THE PROBLEM THE INDUSTRY IS.”

Moving deeper beyond her past adult store experiences and co-creation ideas, the interview progressed far enough to gain insights related to cultural tensions she felt in relation to sexuality. Given her exceptional openness, it was relatively easier to discuss her personal life in comparison to other respondents. She quickly digressed into more personal aspects of her life including tensions within regarding finding and maintaining intimate relationships while pursuing future personal aspirations.

After discussing her current life situation and future aspirations it was apparent that she straddles the pursuit of two lives: one that is more independent and another that is rooted in traditional cultural and gender roles. Bérnice has pursued her own dreams regarding her education, receiving degrees from very prominent universities, as well as starting her own business and soon hoping to own her own home in Finland away from Brazil. Concurrently, she finds herself concerned daily with the desire and pressure to find a man to be supported by emotionally and financially. With traditional ties, both her and her family are more interested in her finding a man for her to plan a future and family over a career and personal life independent of this. At this stage in her life she struggles with pursuing both.

With this, there is an internal tug-of-war between the independent side of herself and trying to fit the cultural ideals of what makes up the 'ideal' woman in order to better find a suitable man looking to fulfill this traditional receiving role. In both appearance and conversation she finds that she must fit the ideal appearance of being "presentable, well kept, fit...playing up my strengths of being beautiful" in addition to not being too dominant, crass or emotional in behavior. It is a balancing act between authentic living (being herself) and inauthentic living (playing into a role). Bérnice engages in contradictory behavior and expressions when striving for this ideal and trying to just be her natural self, both in personality, conversation and appearance. A high amount of energy and stress is involved with this internal tug-of-war. Despite the day-to-day struggle, in the end Bérnice seems to prefer acting out the more traditional roles expected by her culture and family. Even within a partnership, Bérnice insists: "You can't have two main characters, you have to have one strong role and one supporting role. You both provide in different ways."

Within her efforts to convey sexiness, Bérnice describes sexiness to be mainly made up of one's confidence. It is about owning your strengths in personality and in physical form. However, and mainly for woman, being 'sexy' by culturally ideal standards is not necessarily a comfortable endeavor. Bérnice finds that both mentally and physically you have to try hard, take risks and experience discomforts in order to be sexy. She proclaims: "I wax, I pluck, I brush, I apply, I run...being a woman is like being a professional athlete...achieving sexiness is akin to playing a professional sport and in this game the goal is finding the best mate possible!"

In regards to experiencing pleasure, Bérnice believes that when you experience mental or physical feelings of gratification there should more importantly be a cherished sense of value in receiving that pleasure. Within intimate relationships, Bérnice believes that if a partner can take real value in the pleasure she provides, that is commitment enough for her. It is in the lack of appreciation for what is pleasurable that devalues the pleasure it self. She mentions how she continually struggles with finding people who share this value and level of intimacy.

Even in regards to consumer experiences, she finds it difficult to encounter experiences that embody this sense of value between the customer and company. She feels having intimacy, or a real value in pleasure, extends beyond personal relationships to even her purchased sexual experiences including viewing sex shows in Amsterdam, pornography films and adult toys. She asserts: "when viewing sex shows or pornography for pleasure I want to know that the people involved love receiving and giving the pleasure. I want to believe it is genuine if it may not be. Even in pornos...my favorite porn star, Nacho, is my favorite because I know he really loves each and every girl. It seems all consuming for him. That is real sex!"

When telling of a bad adult store service experience at Babeland NYC, she insisted that the service of any great adult store must be warm, welcoming and genuine as this is akin to any forming intimacy. She states: "I'm warm, especially in sex, so if I'm going to be buying stuff about sex I'd like where I'm going to be warm as well." This feeling should be felt from store-front to the interior lighting, materials, service and overall quality in environment, service and products. The sales staff should focus on being both welcoming and extremely knowledgeable. Additionally, the intimacy of customer and merchant could be furthered through thoughtful service follow up. For example she states how an adult store could: "over deliver on personalized service in a genuine way...like calling certain customers to say 'hey, we just got this new product in that we think you'd really like' not just because it's new or to make sale but because you know me/like me so much...that kind of intimacy you just don't get." She furthered this by saying:

“ *INTMACY IS NOT JUST IN THE MOMENT, IT IS
IN THE GOOD, THE BAD AND GETTING THROUGH
THAT - WITH ANY TYPE OF RELATIONSHIP
SEXUAL OR NOT.* ”

Similar to this insight of pleasure with commitment through cherishing the value, is the need for understanding pleasure versus entertainment. So often she experiences people and life experiences that are more about entertainment, from sex shows in Amsterdam that are much more about the physical demonstration to strip mall consumer experiences. She found this especially common when living in the United States for three years prior. From average American restaurant, shopping and entertainment programs, she feels: "American's know entertainment better than anyone but they don't understand pleasure. Pleasure is taking sweet satisfaction in doing nothing and finding value in it...even in the smallest things."

JANNE



JANNE		
38	M	Finnish, heterosexual, married, not religious Has worked at Keltainen Ruusu for 8+ years Industry Expert
SECRETIVE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPLICIT
NEWBIE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPERT
SEX: HATES	<div><div></div></div>	LOVES
SEX: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
BODY: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
SOCIOSEXUALLY RESTRICTIVE	<div><div></div></div>	SOCIOSEXUALLY UNRESTRICTIVE
SUMMARY INSIGHTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">_ Guilt by religious influence_ Slow progression		SUMMARY IDEAS <ul style="list-style-type: none">_ Adult store ethos_ Cinema offering vilifies adult toys

MEETING JANNE

The introduction to one of Helsinki's most popular adult stores came from multiple, mostly young adult male, sources that had heard about the location through friends, radio advertisements and part urban legend. After hearing more about it's popularity and extensive basement cinema offering, I visited Keltainen Ruusu and inquired about an interview. I quickly became introduced to their longest running employee, Janne, who seem to be familiar with answering press questions and a variety of customer inquiries. Despite his physical and environmental presence being somewhat intimidating, Janne was a very friendly, insightful and an open respondent.

After agreeing to an interview, we met again at Keltainen Ruusu during his day off. We began with an overall tour of the store from the ground level offering a very wide range of adult toys and video rentals to the basement level. Here customers were charged 12 euros for entrance into the cinema area that includes approximately 40 'cabins' featuring a range of pornography films from the latest video returns, with only a small majority reserved for gay pornography. During my afternoon visit, the basement was sparsely populated and lit up

only by the television screens. Further beyond the cabins the basement continues where the imagination starts and urban legend lives.

One interesting comment made by Janne during our initial tour of the cinema was how offering a cinema experience, and pornography in general, tends to bring a different meaning to adult products and stores as a whole. With pornography being viewed as exceptionally objectifying and taboo, pornography's use of adult toys perpetuates this connotation through products, some more than others. He asserts that this is possibly why competitors, such as SinCity, never offered a cinema, given it's 'female friendly' positioning. SinCity closed their doors and online store years ago, possibly due to overexpansion. Janne wasn't sure why they closed down, however he thought their approach was quite timid and safe given the products they were offering. He describes the location as very delicate, safe and cute with the female friendly approach hoping to appeal to a more mass market within the city center.

The basement setting within Keltainen Ruusu offers a very real experience. He described an interesting and graphic story that took place in the basement during the closing hours where he was trying to remind two customers that the building was now closed. Their reaction revealed an interesting insight regarding social codes of conduct or social ethos. The customer proceeded to argue over the closing time with Janne while continuing to engage in their previous mode of conduct without a flinch. Within the basement, normal social rules don't necessarily apply between individuals: "when you come down here, the social rules change."

Towards the end of our discussion, Janne described one of his worst days of work at Keltainen Ruusu. One day they received a random visit from a religious fanatic who declared himself loudly at the base of the staircase entrance within the store, damning Janne and all the customers inside to hell. His damnation was quickly ended by a very unpleasant and crass rebuttal from Janne for all his customers to hear. Shocked by Janne's reply, yet somehow pleased for his passion to defend the store. While he does not like the shame of sex associated with religion that is still felt often at his workplace, he is appreciative to work at a place where he can say what he thinks and not have to be submissive for the sake of protecting a company image as he would have to elsewhere. Despite his past employment at Sokos and the Finnish Film Archive he states:

"I still enjoy working here the most. There's never a dull moment. There's always something happening whether it is big or small."

HURMAT



HURMAT

30

M

Afghan, heterosexual, Islamic, abstinent
Working in IT field, single, rents alone
No adult toy product or store experiences

SECRETIVE



EXPLICIT

NEWBIE



EXPERT

SEX: HATES



LOVES

SEX: BAD



GOOD

BODY: BAD



GOOD

SOCIOSEXUALLY
RESTRICTIVE



SOCIOSEXUALLY
UNRESTRICTIVE

SUMMARY INSIGHTS

- _ Divine ideal as a hindrance
- _ Temptation starts with the eyes

MEETING HURMAT

Hurmat was an early chain referral that was open and excited to share his views on sexuality, given his more religious lifestyle that is quite a contrast to the previous respondents. Hurmat is a young Islamic man from Afghanistan who has been living in Finland for the past four years pursuing his career in the IT field. When first meeting him for the interview he quickly revealed, as to not let me assume complete chastity that he had engaged in sexual acts a few times over the last five years, which he since regretted. He concluded that he was still pursuing a life of abstinence until marriage and that he was still unfamiliar with any type of adult products, entertainment or stores. However, he mentioned that he would be accepting of entering an adult store and using products if his future wife persuaded him to.

After slowly catching up with his current life situation and religious background and viewpoints, it became apparent that Hurmat's main struggles in daily life, even beyond sexual desires, have to do with his beliefs in what is 'pure' and what he feels makes him self-actualized. For religious and cultural reasons this includes abstaining from sex, drugs, and alcohol. However, this abstinence or need for restrictive control can extend to other items

items of pleasure, if they cause harm to other or himself, such as the excessive use or obsessive interest in a hobby or activity. Everything should be strictly moderated as to avoid the loss of control and need/desire for something external.

He values, both in himself and in others, the strength and ability to abstain from things, people, experiences that would inflict negatively on other people or cause a personal loss of self control mentally or physically. Whether it is food or sexual experiences, he feels in order to become a 'better human' one must exercise their ability as a human to chose to abstain from what is excessive, harmful or unholy. He states:

“ *I SHOULD BE ABLE TO DIE WITHOUT REGRETS. NOT AFFECTING ANYONE NEGATIVELY BUT MYSELF, BECAUSE ON THE DAY OF JUDGMENT IT IS BETWEEN GOD AND ME. THIS IS WHAT BEING HUMAN IS. NOT OWING ANYONE ANYTHING.* ”

Throughout the interview he continually mentioned how this human “ability to choose to abstain from pleasurable things in life is what separates us from other animals. Why would you not use this ability if you have it?”

In regards to his sexual behavior, he aspires to live a celibate life until marriage, whether it is self chosen or arranged by his family, despite engaging in sex approximately three times prior. He speaks of these past events with noticeable regret and shame, as they are evidence to him of how he did not live up to his expectations. Failing to abstain from pleasures of all types, from cigarettes, alcohol to sex, has caused noticeable tension in his life, as he is conflicted between his aspirational self and his actual personal habits. These habits range from past sexual encounters, multiple incidents of excessive alcohol use as well as being currently addicted to cigarettes. Failing to abstain from these personal vices, as they are excesses of pleasure that have caused 'harm to himself', has created moments of stress, shame, guilt and regret within his life. When reflecting on his actual behavior both past and current, there is a sense of guilt in his voice and lack of eye contact that is noticeable, as he is confronted by not living up to his self-made mental ideal of himself. However, these negative feelings seem to strengthen this divine concept of his ideal self further, which helps to fuel his continued pursuit of abstinence from sex, alcohol and hopefully soon, cigarettes.

Overall, Hurmat's need for celibacy towards certain pleasures seem to create a problematic self-image between the reality of his nature and the mental ideal of himself. In contrast in to the previous two respondents who had a very different belief system and lifestyle, it made me realize how much one's personal problems and stresses are more self created than externally created.

One of our last discussions discussed the cultural standards of women within his native home. He discussed how it was interesting how they still need to cover up their bodies, yet believed this did not solve the problem of temptation for men. Hurmat, made an interesting point about where he believed real temptation starts, the eyes. “Anything good or bad starts from the eyes. It is the first look that starts temptation.”

LEO



LEO / LILI		
36	M	Finnish, pansexual, transgender, non-monogomous, IT Consultant, lives with girlfriend, highly knowledgable user.
SECRETIVE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPLICIT
NEWBIE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPERT
SEX: HATES	<div><div></div></div>	LOVES
SEX: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
BODY: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
SOCIOSEXUALLY RESTRICTIVE	<div><div></div></div>	SOCIOSEXUALLY UNRESTRICTIVE
SUMMARY INSIGHTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">_ Duality of Gender_ Gender Ideals vs. being		SUMMARY IDEAS <ul style="list-style-type: none">_ Sex is with People, Not Things_ Porn not Prude - 'Erotica'_ Using Natural /Nature Elements

MEETING LEO

Leo was one of the first interviewees and one of the most memorable. He was referred by a fellow student at Aalto University who had previously attended school with him and knew of his interests in pole dancing and performing. Initially, Leo seemed to be an appropriate candidate for interviewing given his passion for pole dancing and performing in the erotic arts realm. However, during the course of our two-hour discussion he disclosed additional facts about himself that made him an even more appropriate candidate to interview. Keeping the recruitment scales in mind, Leo possessed other extremes in having high adult product and store knowledge as well as being more unrestrictive in sociosexual behavior.

In public view, one would assume that Leo is a typical young Finnish man. He is a friendly yet reserved 36 year old who has had a successful career working as a concept designer. His fondness for pole dancing and performing seemed, at first, to be just an interesting quirk to his already creatively inclined personality. Upon further discussion, Leo gradually disclosed his opinions and behaviors that made him quite unique in comparison to the general public. Early on in our conversation he mentioned how he liked pole dancing because it surrounded

him with like-minded people – mainly women. He went on to disclose how he found most 'beer drinking, ice hockey watching' men to be uncomfortable and unpleasant to be around in comparison to most women. This is what has led him to pursue other more female dominated hobbies like yoga and pole dancing. He describes this issue within his personal life in more detail:

"In daily life I'm surrounded by a lot of people who are not from that certain group I'm usually friends with (women). That type of (male-work) environment is really different. Leo is a bit of an outsider and he doesn't really fit in....in my professional field 9/10 people are male and I have that 'male problem' again... this is a huge amount of time in my life...then I'm an outsider a lot of time."

“

LEO IS A BIT OF AN OUTSIDER AND HE DOESN'T REALLY FIT IN...IN MY PROFESSIONAL FIELD 9/10 PEOPLE ARE MALE AND I HAVE THAT 'MALE PROBLEM' AGAIN...THIS IS A HUGE AMOUNT OF MY LIFE...THEN I'M AN OUTSIDER A LOT OF THE TIME."

With the majority of his daily life spent in an atmosphere that makes him uncomfortable in being himself it became clear why he pursued yoga in the past and now pole dancing. Further empathy was gained in understanding this tension in his daily life when he described one of his worst work experiences. He was stuck on a charter plane for a few hours for a company trip surrounded by his male co-workers who were drinking and celebrating. He describes:

"I couldn't relate to anyone at all. I was in the middle of the plane sitting on an aisle seat with a lot of people on all sides, making a lot of noise and everyone is having a lot of fun and I'm not having any fun. The more fun they have the less fun I have. That makes me pull up shields and go to myself. It would be easier to disappear and be out of the way. I felt like a stone in the ocean and the waves are hitting the stone and it's harsh and physical. I felt this for the majority of the 4 hour plane ride."

Eventually through our discussion, it became more apparent why he did not feel comfortable in this all-male setting. He expressed that he did not fully believe in the traditional idea of gender:

"One reason why pole dancing was such a nice hobby for me is that the group was entirely female. My own gender identity is not really male. I'm not set on any word at any moment...but some sort of transgender identity."

Throughout our discussion it was discernable that his interest in pole dancing acted as a positive and safe environment for him to foster a sense of identity for himself and build his self-confidence. While he describes himself negatively as an outsider at work, he feels welcomed, included and desired when involved in the pole-dancing environment:

"I like the attention. I like to look good. I like the positive attention. I like the thrill when I'm stage and most the time of when I perform it's most a female audience and hundreds of girls just screaming." (While he's the only male performer.)

With this positive reinforcement, Leo went on further to describe how pole dancing relates to his sexuality and self-confidence:

"Pole dancing does relate to my sexuality. Of course the looking good part is something. Being the only guy and a lot of girls and having a lot of fun with very little clothing on...I'd be lying if I said it wasn't erotic....The kind of kicks that I get from the admiration...it is sexual, in a way...not only sexual but a lot of it."

From his public life and interest in pole dancing we eventually touched on aspects of his private life. He disclosed that he was in an open relationship with his girlfriend, where both Leo and his girlfriend are able to candidly discuss and potentially pursue other partners as a means to explore their sexuality and desires further. The personal topic of his relationship led him to open up further with his opinions and personal behaviors related to the idea of gender and sexuality. While he earlier revealed that he doesn't necessarily believe in the notions of gender and that while he was born a man, he considers himself gender neutral or transsexual. Leo opened up even further to disclose that, on occasion, he engages in cross-dressing. By doing so, Leo is then able to become whom he calls 'Lili', a female persona of himself that not only looks but also behaves quite differently from Leo. He explains more in detail:

“ *HAVING THIS OTHER TWIN OF ME, LILI, SHE'S REALLY DIFFERENT THAN LEO. SHE'S MORE OUTGOING AND FUN AND MORE EASY TO APPROACH AND NOT SO SERIOUS. I DON'T KNOW WHY LEO CAN'T BE THAT WAY...* ”



The physical transformation from Leo to Lili through make up and clothes allows him to adopt a different personality. Leo finds Lili to be a more liberated version of himself that he as Leo cannot be.

“ *FOR A FEMALE IT IS EASIER. THE ADMIRATION GIRLS GET. GUYS SOMETIMES PUT YOU ON THIS PEDESTAL AND ‘YOU ARE SO BEAUTIFUL’ BUT YOU HARDLY EVER FEEL THAT AS A GUY. THE ONLY TIMES I’VE ACTUALLY FELT THAT HAS BEEN ON STAGE POLE DANCING.* ”

In reviewing the discussion with Leo it seemed that the duality of gender was a key tension in his daily life. Additionally, the expectations associated with this duality, being a man or woman, furthers this cultural tension. Torn between the duality of gender, Leo maintains expressing his male identity because his physical attributes are closer to the cultural ideals of masculinity than they are femininity. He elaborated on why he would not opt for undergoing a sex change operation despite feeling more comfortable at times with being a woman like Lili: “That (changing gender) of course, for a guy my age would be a big process. I wouldn’t come out as a relatively equally nice looking girl as I am a nice looking guy.”

Given this, Leo seems to exhibit two lives at times, one as Leo and one as Lili. By doing so he maximize his acceptance within different social settings. However, the idea of authentic living, or being true to the nature of himself, is complicated and compromised as a result.

Before reviewing the visuals within the creative kit, one of the final points Leo made within the discussion highlights how his actions in becoming Lili and engaging in pole-dancing build a sense of identity and confidence that helps him feel continually happy and renewed, even days after.

“ *POLE DANCING IS A SMALLER EXPERIENCE AND ‘DOLLING UP’ AS A GIRL IS A LOT BIGGER EXPERIENCE. BEING ABLE TO DANCE OR DRESS UP IS BEING ABLE TO FACE PEOPLE IN SITUATIONS. FINDING SUCCESS OR BEING REALLY GREAT AT IT IS SOMETHING THAT CARRIES YOU ON FOR A WEEK AFTER THE PERFORMANCE...BUT IT ALSO GIVES YOU CONFIDENCE WHERE I CAN REALLY BE MYSELF.* ”

After sharing an insightful capture into his life, Leo helped to conclude the remainder of our two hour discussion by sharing his experiences and ideas around adult store experiences through the use of the creative kit. He offered three main themes throughout his review of the creative kit imagery. The first and most important idea being that sex is really with

people, not things. Leo commented on how most adult stores within Helsinki, and even online shops, focus so much on the products as objects that fulfill a specific function and physical pleasure purpose. He commented how “sex is something you do with people, not really something you do with certain accessories.” When considering future branding and communication design strategies for a pleasure boutique, this was an important insight to gain, especially from a user familiar with many adult stores and products.

“ *SEX IS SOMETHING YOU DO WITH PEOPLE, NOT THINGS.* ”

Similarly, Leo also preferred the website and retail images within the creative kit that were more personable and natural. From websites to in-store examples, he preferred the use of natural light, white and light backgrounds and the use of organic materials and textures. Additionally, he remarked that it would be most comfortable and welcoming if women made up the sales staff.

His last two ideas involve a sense of honesty and empathy when considering the communication of products. Firstly, when female mannequins and/or models are used in-store or within website images, Leo thought that their poses should be not be the standard and expected ‘damsels in distress’ poses but something more natural and realistic.

More insightful was his second remark regarding the product offering of pornography. Having lived in Helsinki for many years, Leo seemed to be very familiar with the changing adult store industry. He described an adult store, Harness, that once existed in Helsinki 10-15 years ago where he use to frequent. He found it to be an original and authentic experience, as it was a part of the SMDB related subculture that he was interested in at that time. This store later ‘sold out’ in Leo’s opinion, adopting the name SinCity along with a cute and more prude ‘female friendly’ approach in attempt to grab a wider consumer base. Here they sold products, including pornography, under more approachable naming like ‘erotica’. Leo believed that “saying no porn is a bit prude. It is good to have the rough thing or whatever you feel like to go a bit further. From his response it seemed at limiting the product offering of pornography is not a way to exhibit a sense of tastefulness but just another form of exhibiting shame.

SOPHIE



SOPHIA		
30	F	Finnish, homosexual, porn magazine founder and editor, in committed relationship with girlfriend where polygomy is discussed.
SECRETIVE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPLICIT
NEWBIE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPERT
SEX: HATES	<div><div></div></div>	LOVES
SEX: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
BODY: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
SOCIOSEXUALLY RESTRICTIVE	<div><div></div></div>	SOCIOSEXUALLY UNRESTRICTIVE
SUMMARY INSIGHTS		SUMMARY IDEAS
_ Gender divisions		_ Straight forward attitude towards sex
		_ Passionate and genuine service

MEETING SOPHIE

Sophia was introduced while immersing myself in another unfamiliar setting. Knowing of my thesis topic, a classmate informed me of a release party for a new pornography magazine within Helsinki. Through a chain of referrals that I encountered prior and during the release party I was eventually introduced to Sophia, one of the founders of the pornography magazine. In addition to being both founder and editor, she also appeared in the first issue. With her profession in the context of pornography, Sophia was additionally an appropriate candidate to interview with her positive view towards sexuality and the human body when considering the recruitment scales. Her effort in starting the pornography magazine was to promote a pornography source for women specifically. After explaining my interest in designing a pleasure boutique to promote positivity around sexual exploration and confidence building she was enthusiastic and agreed to be interviewed.

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Our discussion and her insights stemmed primarily from her past experiences with adult stores. The first insight gained from our discussion was shared with almost all respondents prior, this being the issue of gender duality and gender expectations. Sophia had experienced issues in regarding gender roles within society and how this in turn influenced adult store services and their product offerings. It is standard for both traditional male dominated adult stores and more modern 'female friendly' shops to theme their service and product offerings around the divisions of men and women, heterosexual and homosexual. As a homosexual woman, Sophia thought that the product offering and experience of more 'refined' or female friendly adult stores were too covert about their intentions, despite being catered more for her audience. These types of female friendly adult stores often create a more boutique experience, carrying more lingerie and accessory four play related products that, in her opinion, skate around sex. The actual sexual content, pornography, and toys are non-existent or pushed to the back corner. With this type of service and product display, Sophia felt stores such as these were "trying to hide the sex aspects behind caring more about appearance." It would be of interest to Sophia if adult store offerings were organized without prejudice and open to all concepts of identity. She commented:

“ I DON'T LIKE THE 'FOR HIM' AND 'FOR HER' CATEGORIES. I DON'T FIND MYSELF IN THOSE CATEGORIES. I'M NOT IN THE CATEGORIES OF APPROVED BEHAVIOR. I DON'T WANT A SHOP TO BE 'FRIENDLY' TO ME - I JUST WANT IT TO BE FOR ME.”

In regards to visuals, she thought the use of color should also be bold, like sex, and not appropriated to typical gender standards. "Pastel colors are always used for women. Sex is not pastel colors. It's full on." When reviewing the black and moody website of the Swedish adult toy brand, LELO, she gave an interesting remark regarding gender standards illustrated once again:

"(LELO website) gives me the idea that if it's for women then the page has to be black because sex is a bit daring thing and you have to do it in a very private and daring....maybe candle lit place. And that is a bit annoying it could be something open something to be proud of. (The website examples) even say 'daring'...no wonder!"

To further the issue of gender standards, Sophia recognized this issues even within names of many adult stores. Sophia offered an interesting perspective by pointing out how many more 'refined' adult stores actually obscure the real intension and service offering further by using less obvious names such as Babeland, Kiki De Montparnasse or Shebop. She questioned if this was just another form of exhibiting shame. Additionally, she discussed how even the category of stores describe the experience:

“‘Adult store’ is sort of shameful because you can’t talk about sex or pleasure but you have to find a way around it so you say ‘well...it’s for adults’ and it’s left to the imagination. ‘Sex shop’ or ‘pleasure boutique’ is more open in a way. ‘Pleasure boutique’ sounds better than sex shops since most sex shops aren’t selling sex!”

“ ‘ADULT STORE’ IS SORT OF SHAMEFUL BECAUSE YOU CAN’T TALK ABOUT SEX OR PLEASURE BUT YOU HAVE TO FIND A WAY AROUND SEX SO YOU SAY WELL...IT’S FOR ADULTS.”

With similar remarks to the previous respondent, Leo, Sophia also felt that the use of ‘erotica’ was a more prude and shameful term that ill describes a product. This is primarily why she did not call her magazine an erotica magazine. She additionally adds to this opinion, with further offense, that this prudish wording is often prescribed more specifically for women.

“ I GET THE FEELING THAT PORN IS RESERVED FOR MEN AND EROTICA IS FOR WOMEN. I DON’T BELIEVE LEAVING SUCH A DIVISION BETWEEN MEN AND WOMEN. I DON’T THINK PEOPLE ARE ‘MEN’ AND ‘WOMEN’ IN THAT SENSE.”

The second insight gained from Sophia, was the need for more genuine and down-to-earth visual and written communication when representing sexual pleasure. It seemed to be a careful balance of being respectful and honest yet daring and playful. Similar to her earlier comments on pornography versus erotica, the description of products and categories within stores and online should be clear and not confusing, as to concealing the purpose of products due to shame. She describes past issues with purchasing within adult stores in Helsinki and online: “It is difficult to know how and where to look (online/in-store) if the naming is too difficult with vague categories that confuse instead of inform.”

Referring from the website examples within the creative kit, she contributed that the imagery used within communication would ideally convey a story that is more natural and real where it doesn’t seem posed, for someone else’s pleasure, and doesn’t objectify women in expected ways. This was also a similar idea to almost all previous respondents.

The last insight gained from Sophia, the importance of perceived value within pleasure products and experience. This was gained from her describing her most positive memory of visiting an adult store. She was visiting her now favorite store, Playstix, a small store in Berlin offering unique dildos by sculpture Stephanie Dörr. Sophia described a great and unique adult toy product offering and more importantly a unique and meaningful experience. She found satisfaction that the owner was not only an artist but was very passionate about her products and work. Sophia describes this experience with enthusiasm:

“The owner was a sculptor who had been designing dildos for a long time and was really into it. She had a small place...all the dildos were done with practicality and design in mind and they were unique.”

Additionally, Dörr’s store allowed her to try on various products that you often cannot in most stores. From the passion and artistry behind the products, the service offered by Dörr made for a high quality and memorable experience. Sophia reminisced on feeling very

welcomed by her professional, direct and helpful service:

"She straight forwardly asked what kind of sex I'm into, what I do, what I like so that she can take this into account when talking about the products....she was so calm and confident and professional about what she does...so she is the expert and I can tell her what feels good and she'll have suggestions."

This quality service experience example was insightful to hear as a means of benchmarking qualities within successful and meaningful adult store services.

BETTIE BLACKHEART



BETTIE BLACKHEART		
40	F	Finnish, heterosexual, professional burlesque dancer, married.
SECRETIVE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPLICIT
NEWBIE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPERT
SEX: HATES	<div><div></div></div>	LOVES
SEX: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
BODY: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
SOCIOSEXUALLY RESTRICTIVE	<div><div></div></div>	SOCIOSEXUALLY UNRESTRICTIVE
SUMMARY INSIGHTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">_ 'Rebelling' = Living_ Gender divisions		SUMMARY IDEAS <ul style="list-style-type: none">_ Straight forward attitude towards sex_ Untraditional visuals

MEETING BETTIE BLACKHEART

Bettie Blackheart is a professional burlesque dancer and instructor. She is also the organizer of the annual Helsinki Burlesque Festival. Given her professional experience in the context of erotic based dancing, the previous interviewee, Leo, referred her a potential candidate.

Since Bettie was a teenager she has admired emotionally strong, bold, independent women. From her grandmother to music icons like Nina Hagen and Madonna, she finds these different female role models to exhibit perseverance and boldness through their highly expressive, often polarizing, personalities and physical appearances.

Her first memory of admiring this quality in women was when she was about 11 years old. She was doing jazz ballet and saw an instructor with blue hair who made and danced to her own routines. The admiration and aspiration to be expressively bold and independent continued throughout her life. She soon started sewing her own daring and extravagant clothes that incorporated a bondage style. She admired old movies with busty women, like Conan the Barbarian, as well as western films that incorporated the 'lone cowboy' persona

which she now admires in men. As a kid she often dressed up as these characters and was drawn to punk and pirate styles instead of the typical princess.

The need to express herself, similar to the women she admired, was authentic living to her that society and sometimes the people close to her did not find acceptable or ideal. Throughout her life she had found various social groups to be 'herself' within. At the age of 16 she was living on the streets of Helsinki where she was considered 'one of the kids of the RR station' – a rebellious group of young adults known in Helsinki. She enjoyed photographing the empty streets of Helsinki and the porn store windows of the streets she hung out in. During this time she started art school to pursue painting, furthering her network of like-minded people.

The internal desire to be expressive with herself and her artwork continued throughout her life as she pursued an education in fine art. When she was 32 she pursued entry into another subculture, burlesque, within Helsinki after seeing a burlesque photo book and performance. She describes her first burlesque show experience as a life changing experience:

“ I NEVER FELT SO AT HOME...THERE WAS MUSIC, CIRCUS PEOPLE, FREAKS, STRONG WOMEN AND IT WAS VERY VISUAL. I HAVE A STRONG MEMORY OF THIS MOMENT. I EVEN REMEMBER WHAT I WAS WEARING.”
(HER FIRST BURLESQUE SHOW)

She finds a sense of freedom from social standards and boundaries with doing burlesque. It is something that transcends age, body and social ideals. She states: “You can be an old lady, you can dance without being a fit and tiny 22 year old.”

By hearing her life story as a collection of moments where she pursued her own ideals of womanhood and identity that the first insight was gained. It seemed her rebellion and comfort against standard ideals of women is what led her to a sense of freedom and in turn, happiness.

To further this point, she discussed that prior to discovering burlesque, she recalled a difficult time in her life where she was negatively influenced to not pursue her own path in expressing herself and her artwork publicly. “I tried being 'normal' once where I was just working and not dancing or doing art. I wasn't myself.”

During this time in her life she was influenced to engage living a lifestyle that was inauthentic to herself and her need to express herself artistically. This moment in her life revealed a second insight, similar to previous interviewees she experienced tension within her life because of cultural expectations of what is a 'normal' life, as well as what it is to be an ideal and/or appropriate woman. It was suggested to her during this time that she should abide by certain standards, including not exhibiting any of her art. This period of her life fortunately did not last long as she eventually continued pursuing her own real interests in exhibiting her art and eventually pursuing burlesque.

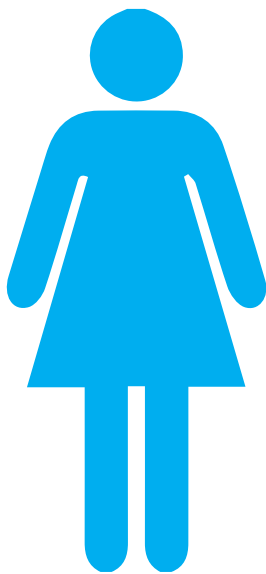
Now, at the age of 40, she has spent a near decade surrounding herself in the burlesque subculture, and in a way making it her own. She has developed a strong sense of self and confidence in relation to burlesque. She has accomplished authority and responsibility through her experience and is now a popular performer and instructor, studying under burlesque legend, Kiki Hawaii. She has been responsible for organizing Helsinki's annual

burlesque festival and teaching 100's of women the art of burlesque dancing. It seems burlesque has offered her a sense of self-actualization. She described one of her best memories in doing burlesque. It was a recent performance she did with her mentor, famous burlesque dancer and fire tassel creator, Kiki Hawaii:

“

*WE BROUGHT OUR FIRE TASSELS TOGETHER AND
THEN SHE (KIKI) BOWED TO ME! IT WAS LIKE
A MOMENT OF HONOR.”*

DAISY



DAISY		
23	F	German, art student, bisexual, non-monogomous, artist focused on body form and gender.
SECRETIVE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPLICIT
NEWBIE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPERT
SEX: HATES	<div><div></div></div>	LOVES
SEX: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
BODY: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
SOCIOSEXUALLY RESTRICTIVE	<div><div></div></div>	SOCIOSEXUALLY UNRESTRICTIVE
SUMMARY INSIGHTS <ul style="list-style-type: none">_ Gender ideals and beauty		SUMMARY IDEAS <ul style="list-style-type: none">_ Straight forward attitude towards sex_ Untraditional, unexpected visuals and communication_ Hands-on experience with products_ Use of natural materials

MEETING DAISY

Daisy is a young aspiring fine art photographer currently in university. She is slightly androgynous looking with a very soft voice yet firm opinions. She was a chain referral made through previous respondent contacts. In reference to the sexuality map mentioned earlier, she was an appropriate candidate initially with her interest in photography as it relates to the human body and gender. Secondly, in regards to recruitment scales, she also acted as a unique extreme since she had never been to an adult store, was unfamiliar with adult products and was fairly secretive and guarded when discussing her sexuality.

When beginning with her background and current lifestyle she mentioned her relationship status as uncommitted. She disclosed that she did not believe in the concept of marriage, nor did she practice or desire a monogamous relationship at any point in the future. She believed that relationships of all types should flow naturally and not require a monogamous commitment or feelings and promises of being 'in love'. She believed that there were many different types and forms of love and that love, platonic or not, could be expressed in many different ways and that there should be no linear guideline to loving.

Moving into the creative kit to further discussion, her first comments focused on how many of the women represented from models to mannequin forms where figures that she could not identify with. She felt by using these images and mannequins the stores and products offered were not meant for her. She didn't seem offended by this but she did feel that is what kept her from going into adult stores and lingerie stores and from purchasing the related products. She stated:

"I so far out of the standard beauty system that I don't feel obligated to abide to buy and wear bras, fancy underwear or these adult accessories."

“ I’M SO FAR OUT OF THE STANDARD BEAUTY SYSTEM THAT I DON’T FEEL OBLIGATED TO ABIDE TO BUY AND WEAR BRAS, FANCY UNDERWEAR OR THESE ADULT ACCESSORIES.”

Although she felt that she identified with a more alternative female identity, she disclosed that at certain moments she was curious and felt pressured to dress, behave and look like more like societies version of an 'ideal' woman. With a past interested and experience with feminist organizations she felt like identifying with this ideal was another way of oppressing herself as a woman and her natural sense of identity.

"I admire and aspire, or at least wonder what it would be like to be beautiful...stereotypical woman, I know that is not me. It would feel so fake a wrong for me to look that way. I would feel ashamed in away for not being me in order to please someone else."

Daisy's comments reveal a shared tension regarding gender expectations as well as the pressure to compromise herself to meet these expected ideals. Similarly to Bettie Blackheart, she is feels more freedom to be confident in herself and be happy when living a more alternative lifestyle from these ideals. Early on in our conversation she discussed how she felt 'at home' when she discovered the feminist organizations she had worked with in the past. Meeting the individuals within this feminist organization in Germany and abroad is what led her to focus her photography efforts more on the human form and gender roles and inequality.

When reviewing more of the creative kit imagery offered further ideas that would make a store more approachable for her. Some of these ideas also relate to previous respondents' opinions. As previously mentioned, she thought the use of models and mannequins represented could be less expected and typical in expression, pose and demeanor. She thought the models and mannequins should be more natural in pose and expression as well as more realistic in shape and size.

When considering online and in-store colors and materials she thought, much like earlier respondents, that the adult stores should use more white over black. The use of natural textures and materials like wood would be more welcoming, real and personable. Additionally, she thought the space layout could be more natural like an apartment and less propped and staged like a standard store or museum. Daisy's favorite shopping experiences are recycling centers. She feels welcomed and comfortable in comparison to standard shopping experiences. She felt most stores, especially with main shopping areas in Helsinki, make her feel unwelcomed and potentially unable to afford or touch and view items the way she would like. With this she also thought it would be appropriate if a pleasure boutique were conveniently located but slightly off from the main shopping districts.

DANIEL



DANIEL		
36	M	American, single, heterosexual, Catholic priest
SECRETIVE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPLICIT
NEWBIE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPERT
SEX: HATES	<div><div></div></div>	LOVES
SEX: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
BODY: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
SOCIOSEXUALLY RESTRICTIVE	<div><div></div></div>	SOCIOSEXUALLY UNRESTRICTIVE
SUMMARY INSIGHTS _ Celebacy and ideal aspirations		SUMMARY IDEAS _ Should help to promote sex only after marriage _ Less overtly sexual images and communication

MEETING DANIEL

Daniel is an American who has been working in the church since he was 13. He has been a Catholic priest since the age of 31. Prior to this he was working with the church on non-profit efforts around the United States. I was introduced through a small chain of referrals who knew of my difficulty in finding a willing and open abstinent religious figure to interview. With the referral of trusted friends from the church, Daniel agreed for an hour discussion.

We met in small meeting room off from the church benches. Daniel began with describing his background and history with the church, stemming from his parents' devotion and fondness for the church and its members. When discussing his thoughts on sexuality in relation to my business concept he made his lifestyle of abstinent known. His level of distain for pre-marital sex and 'over-sexualized' contemporary culture was also very apparent with a few blatant remarks and in his tone. Once he had these initial preplanned statements stated, we were able to progress further into his beliefs of celibacy and overall feelings towards sex.

He initially stated that he had grown up learning and understanding that sex was a sin,

especially before marriage. Daniel mentioned that: “while sex is something that committed married partners do, to build a family, my calling was to be a priest, not a husband.” He went on to describe why his celibacy was central to the purity of his priesthood:

“I abstain to honor my body and to be faithful to God. I have promised to devote my life to God and spread his teachings.....If I were to sin sexually, I would sin my body, which houses the Holy Spirit of God - the most important thing in my life. I would never want to lose that. It is part of my being...I abstain from acts of sin because I want and need that freedom of conscience.”

When asking if maintaining a life of celibacy was ever an issue in his life he commented on how it was unusual for some neighborhood and family friends of his age un-devoted to this practice. He describes how it was a social conflict early in his work with the church:

“When I was in my twenties I found it (celibacy) to be an issue, a part of my life that I was somewhat ostracized for, even amongst my friends who were Christian, and even some who are Fathers now.”

Daniel candidly disclosed that while he felt pressured to go along with his peers he remained focused on his priesthood and promise to God. Mentioning how he was past his teens and mid-twenties he seemed to brush off the life of celibacy as being much easier, as if the feelings subside completely with age. He remarked: “I’ve had those feelings when in the past but that was when I was young and much weaker spiritually.”

This he statement he kept repeating when asked why he thought it was easier now that he was older. I struggled between belief and disbelief in his answers. He mentioned how celibacy to him was now a natural behavior and that it did not require thoughtful intention. After our discussion and after reviewing his answers, it seemed quite the opposite. It was very much unnatural and required conscious thought and effort on his part, at least for a good portion of his life. This was one of the most interesting findings in our discussion. Similar to the gender ideals my previous respondents felt pressured to align themselves with, Daniel felt another pressure in aligning himself with an ideal as well, a divine ideal also socially created. It was a version of himself it wished to uphold for himself, before the church, his peers and God. His beliefs in what is ‘impure’ and the denial of these impure desires help him to align himself with the mental image of being a superior version of himself, one that ‘houses the Holy Spirit of God’.

Through my questions, there also seemed to be a sense of guilt when he once questioned his lifestyle due to his peers and social pressure. During this time he experienced a sort of tensions where he was not living up to this mental concept of his ideal self. This tug-of-war between his ideal self and natural feelings would then create a problematic self-image.

While our discussion was only around an hour long, it felt that Daniel was denying his sexual feelings in order to avoid shattering his idea of being a religious practitioner. He seemed to avoid and suppress his innate sexuality in order to align himself with a sense of ‘truth’ and an ideal mental position of himself. What part of himself was real? It seemed like he was building a lifetime plan in strengthening a false sense of self in order to achieve social ideal.

When discussing the current state of adult stores and the shame associated his main remark was:

“I think shame is a good thing to have. It is the red light. The signal that goes off in us telling us that something we’re doing is wrong. When we avoid this or make exceptions to what should be shameful we are blurring the lines between good and bad, divine and evil.”

With the creative kit present, his feedback was unspecific. His main concerns and ideas were associated with keeping adult stores for married couples at the very least. While looking through some of the adult store imagery within the creative kit, Daniel thought that if I were adamant about planning an adult store that it "should be far less tasteless and explicit with women and objects. It should have some dignity." Loosing interest in the discussion and review of the imagery he made one final memorable reply:

"Society thinks we've progressed socially...and with technology...and this idea of sexual liberation but I'm not sure we have... I believe this is the wrong way. There are so many unwed, unhappy partners and broken families. Even those who claim to know and believe in Christ have no shame and conscious for their behavior. People should be redirecting their energy on following their faith, not the common path of others. While I understand there are those who tempt us all the time, I believe faith...and abstinence would save many people from guilt, regret, rejection and overall pain."

“ *I BELIEVE FAITH...AND ABSTINENCE WOULD
SAVE MANY PEOPLE FROM GUILT, REGRET,
REJECTION AND OVERALL PAIN.* ”

KEVIN



KEVIN		
46	M	American, married with 2 kids, heterosexual, doctor, no experience with adult products and stores.
SECRETIVE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPLICIT
NEWBIE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPERT
SEX: HATES	<div><div></div></div>	LOVES
SEX: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
BODY: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
SOCIOSEXUALLY RESTRICTIVE	<div><div></div></div>	SOCIOSEXUALLY UNRESTRICTIVE
SUMMARY INSIGHTS _ Abstinence and ideal aspirations		SUMMARY IDEAS _ Should help to promote sex only after marriage _ Less overtly sexual images and communication

MEETING KEVIN

Kevin is very outgoing and friendly American doctor, and gym owner, with a wife of 25 years and 2 kids. He and his family are devout Christians against sex outside of marriage. Kevin and his family had been doing volunteer work for a foundation affiliated to the Catholic church where the previous interviewee, Daniel, worked as a priest. It is through this sphere of religious volunteer work that we became introduced. After briefly meeting Kevin I understood that he was an avid churchgoer and volunteer with a known stance against pre-marital sex. Given these details, he was an appropriate fit with his more extreme beliefs and lack of adult store knowledge. With his curious and sociable nature, he was also willing and excited to give his opinions on sexuality and the adult store industry, despite being a novice in this area.

While getting to know Kevin during the course of the interview he focused as much energy on expressing his ideas and opinions about sex and adult stores as he did trying to convert me to his 'better path' of Christian living, despite really knowing much about me. This was partially due to his regular routine of traveling around the United States and abroad

spreading the teachings of his church. Being naturally charismatic and enthusiastic, this sort of promotional work fit him well. He is also co-owner of gym and kept himself very physically fit, which furthered his overall engaging and sociable disposition.

He began mentioning how he grew up in an all-Christian neighborhood. He spoke about it fondly and how the neighborhood felt like his family and looking back 'they were the world' to him. Kevin had always believed, like his community did, that pre-marital sex was wrong, as it was a sin against God. When imploring the use of the 5-Why's to delve deeper into the root of why it was wrong Kevin replied in this order:

"It's wrong, it is a sin against God. Not just as a mere follower but as someone devoted to God."

(Why?)

"The teachings of the church, from the word of God, specifically state that it is wrong."

(Why?)

"Because in our bodies dwells the Holy Spirit of God...and lusting...and acting on lust is a sin against our bodies and against one another...and in turn, the Holy Spirit of God. In a simple way it is like adultery...you are cheating against the love of Christ – our savior!"

(Why do you need the approval or love of Christ through marriage?)

"Pre-marital sex takes away one's purity...the purity that would be shared with their potential wife or husband. You cannot build real love and intimacy without the foundation of God through the bounds of marriage."

**“ YOU CANNOT BUILD REAL LOVE AND INTIMACY
WITHOUT THE FOUNDATION OF GOD THROUGH
THE BOUNDS OF MARRIAGE.”**

Stating the importance of intimacy by way of marriage, Kevin offered a revealing example with the relationship with his wife. He reminisced how they started dating when he was 16. They were 'high school sweethearts' going to the same public school, church and Christian summer camps. He revealed that despite his life long stance against pre-marital sex, the emotional attachment with his now wife 'seemed so natural' that both their defenses eventually lowered by the time they were heading off to college and they had come to a 'dangerous point where hormones and desires were overcoming our reasons to remain pure.' He described that in hindsight their engagement in premarital sex was a big regret that negatively affected their marriage. Something he would never wish for anyone else, including his children. In relation to abstaining for the sake of intimacy he describes in more detail:

"Fortunately, before it progressed for much longer, we began to see the reality of our pre-marital relationship – it felt like intimacy but it was really imitation intimacy. We realized we could not have a genuine loving and truly intimate relationship without the foundation of God."

He went on further to describe the strain it put on him and their relationship.

"After taking a moment to reflect, putting our desires and hormones in check, we discovered we were attempting to build a closer connection through selfish gratification...taking away purity from ourselves and one another and really undermining and dishonoring the love of God and our community. We were regretful and both upset that we had viewed premarital sex much like the rest of our peers – with a selfish attitude of instant gratification and indifference."

Kevin went on to describe how since this realization the relationship with his wife, since their marriage many years ago, is much stronger. He feels this change made for a really honest relationship with himself, his wife, community and God.

"It brings a sense of assurance and confidence within myself and relationships when I am true in my efforts as a Christian. I'm not against people shopping at adult stores and exploring their sexuality but marriage is the best, not to mention the safest place, to explore it. It brings absolute honesty and self-assurance like no other relationship can.....It is two halves together as one, reaching a place closer to God."

“ *IT BRINGS A SENSE OF ASSURANCE AND
CONFIDENCE WITHIN MYSELF AND MY
RELATIONSHIPS WHEN I AM TRUE IN MY EFFORTS
AS A CHRISTIAN.* ”

Similarly, when Kevin spoke of his professional efforts as a doctor and gym owner, they were aspects intended to help him, as well as others, reach a place closer to God. While his earlier comments reveal the importance of intimacy as an insight his following comments reveal a second associated insight. He believes that by being a chiropractor he is able firstly, help others with his medical knowledge and secondly, help them become better physically and in turn mentally. Kevin sees his gym ownership in the same manner. He personally is also devoted to maintaining his fitness level through exercising 6-7 days a week for an hour or more each day. When inquiring why physical fitness was so important to him he reasoned that:

"The bible teaches us that while we are made in the image of God we have fallen and are in need of salvation. Roman 2:23 'for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.'...In helping others and myself through healthy and fitness, I can rise closer to this image of God."

Kevin went on to explain that his efforts in pursuing fitness and other personal goals were only part of self-actualization: "but these efforts alone are not enough, to be self actualized you need something bigger than yourself to get you there. This comes from believing."

He describes how pursuing both self-actualization, in its many forms, and maintaining faith can lead to transformation beyond the self and to society as a whole.

"We are all made in God's image and are obligated to realize our potential as a means of fulfilling and glorifying that image. Self-actualization in all forms from emotional, professional to physical, they all assist in transforming ourselves. If every Christian, or if everyone in general, focused on this daily, society could be transformed for the better."

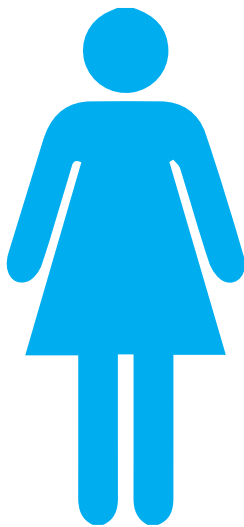
Kevin discussed this philosophy more in depth revealing a secondary insight associated with the first insight of intimacy. This insight is the importance of self-actualization as a means to achieve love – in the sense of agape love, the highest achievement of any Christian.

“My profession, volunteering, fitness activities – everything. It is a pursuit of self realization to become closer to God. I am closer to purity. Closer to being reborn. When Christ spoke of the power this, he defined it as a certain kind of love. This love is found in self-realization and faith. It is a love without fear, emotional or erotic affection. It is the ultimate love. If the highest activity of a Christian is this love, then I of course must continue my life on this path. This is what I hope to spread and why I speak with you now.”

“ *THIS LOVE IS FOUND IN SELF-REALIZATION AND FAITH. IT IS A LOVE WITHOUT FEAR, EMOTIONAL OR EROTIC AFFECTION. IT IS THE ULTIMATE LOVE. IF THE HIGHEST ACTIVITY OF A CHRISTIAN IS THIS LOVE, THEN I COURSE MUST CONTINUE MY LIFE ON LIFE THIS PATH.* ”

Similar to other respondents, Kevin’s insights speak to the importance of people and the need for feeling intimacy. His comments push the idea of intimacy and sense of love further into a philosophy and way of life. These aspects of the interview with Kevin have had a strong influence on the areas of design opportunities, mainly in regards to branding an adult store that would resonate with his concepts of self-actualization and philosophy of love.

ORVOKKI



ORVOKKI		
31	F	Finnish, bisexual, ex-dominatrix, bondage performer, dislikes the act of sex.
SECRETIVE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPLICIT
NEWBIE	<div><div></div></div>	EXPERT
SEX: HATES	<div><div></div></div>	LOVES
SEX: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
BODY: BAD	<div><div></div></div>	GOOD
SOCIOSEXUALLY RESTRICTIVE	<div><div></div></div>	SOCIOSEXUALLY UNRESTRICTIVE
SUMMARY INSIGHTS		SUMMARY IDEAS
_ Gender ideals		_ Straight forward attitude towards sex
_ Sexiness means submission for women		_ Untraditional unexpected and fun
_ Sex, unnecessary indulgence		visuals and communication
_ Opposing traits: Madonna & the whore		

MEETING ORVOKKI

Orvokki was introduced through a chain of referrals during a bondage art performance, another area of context involving both performance art and fetishes. Orvokki was one of the most interesting and extreme respondents. Not only was she a fitting candidate given her profession as a bondage artist performer, she fit multiple other extremes in regards to the recruitment scales. Referring to the sexuality context map, Orvokki was the only respondent that was involved in the area of fetishes, both in her current bondage art profession but also her past career as a dominatrix in Helsinki. Additionally, despite finding sex in general to be a 'beautiful and positive thing for people in general', she was the only interviewee who disliked engaging in sex. (It should be clarified that the work she performed with her clients had a sexual atmosphere, it did not involve sexual acts but different forms of humiliation and power control.) With her professional history, familiarity with adult products and extreme sexual nature and explicitness in conversation, her lack of interest in sex made her a very unique and an unusual respondent.

Beginning with her background and personal history, Orvokki also revealed similar tensions around the pressure of aspiring to gender roles and expectations. She discussed how she realized what extreme importance beauty is for women. She spoke of how her father would always rate and comment on the level of beauty women had in front of her at a very early age. Our discussion took place at one of the venues where she performed. During our talk there were a group of 50's pinup style models preparing for a runway show. She referred to them when discussing of her fathers remarks and the pressure of being beautiful to be valued as a woman:

"I'm disgusted by it....that we would have to be so fucking gorgeous to be accepted. So I have a very conflicted way of thinking about these things. On a good day, I love these types of girls and on a bad day I fucking hate them.....or not them but I hate society and the history of women for being so submissive. I hate that. I hate the fact that we have to play our sexuality and not our intelligence to be accepted."

Additionally, she brings up how women face the issue of 'Madonna and the whore' explaining how not only must women aspire to ideals, on a natural level: "women's body parts are considered unmentionable, ugly and dirty and they need to be made pretty." (from personal grooming to pornography)

“ *I HATE THE FACT THAT WE HAVE TO PLAY OUR SEXUALITY AND NOT OUR INTELLIGENCE TO BE ACCEPTED.* ”

Orvokki, now in her thirties, expressed that she continually struggles with aspiring and rebelling against the ideal standards of beauty, both in regards to appearance and behavior. She pointed out her attire during the interview as a juxtaposition and partial rebellion of this, as her outfit was unrevealing and modest, except for her more aggressive footwear. She wore a conservative beige vintage dress with buttons and white collar paired with knee high black combat boots. Her face was free of make up, her hair un-dyed, undone and pulled back behind her shoulders. She explains part of her appearance in relation to her sense of self and past experience.

"I try not to stand out. That's why I don't color my hair anymore. I've performed and stood out so much that I'm tired of that attention. There's more freedom to just be myself if I don't stand out."

With her very outspoken, crass and opinionated personality, Orvokki went on to describe how she struggles with feeling the need to modify her personality to abide by standards of being a 'nice young woman'. She remarked: "When I behave less of me, people will like me more. I don't fit into the normal standards and it's easier for other people if I try."

“ *THERE'S MORE FREEDOM TO BE MYSELF IF I DON'T STAND OUT.* ”

This discussion of behavior and appearance modification led to the second insight related to the gender expectations of women. Orvokki insists: "if women are sexy they must be

submissive.” Despite the iconic examples of Madonna and other bold women, this is true of mass appeal. Bold and more outspoken women like Madonna acted as her role models, similarly to the previous respondent, Bettie Blackheart. She described a sense of freedom when discussing her female idols: Madonna and dancer Aira Somalina: “They were beautiful...they were powerful, strong...and loud...and rude!...I loved that!...I loved their bad behavior.”

“ *IF WOMEN ARE SEXY THEY MUST BE SUBMISSIVE.* ”

Looking around during the interview towards the pinup style models, she did not see this aspect in them and offered a following remark: “to be a lady is to sit in a prison.” She appeared to see aspects of the servitude in the models near by as well as herself. Despite this, she made another interesting comment that opened the role of genders further to consider that while it is limiting being a woman, it might be more so as a man. She explains: “A man’s box is almost smaller. Their expectations on what it is to be a man is increasing.... women can be strong and weak and men can only be strong.”

“ *TO BE A LADY IS TO SIT IN A PRISION....A MAN’S BOX IS ALMOST SMALLER. THEIR EXPECTATIONS ON WHAT IT IS TO BE A MAN IS INCREASING...WOMEN CAN BE STRONG AND WEAK AND MEN CAN ONLY BE STRONG.* ”

Having discussed a lot about her past and personal life, Orvokki eventually revealed that she had no desire for sex, despite her sexual nature and employment history. It wasn’t that she thought sex was bad, she just had no interest or desire to engage in sexual acts. She revealed that she continually encourages her boyfriend of three years to pursue sexual relationships elsewhere to satisfy his sexual needs. When discussing her indifference towards sex she mentioned she had felt this way for a few years after having an abortion. Additionally she also commented on growing emotionally tired of the attention she received when working as a dominatrix and even now as a performing bondage artist. She made one final interesting point:

“So many other important things besides sex! It’s like chocolate, we need to eat but we can live without chocolate. I don’t need sex. People don’t need sex, they just want it.”

“ *SO MANY OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS BESIDES SEX! IT’S LIKE CHOCOLATE, WE NEED TO EAT BUT WE CAN LIVE WITHOUT CHOCOLATE. I DON’T NEED SEX. PEOPLE DON’T NEED SEX, THEY JUST WANT IT.* ”

3.3 COMMON INSIGHT THEMES

Given these ten user respondent summaries a collection of insights was gathered and themed into three common insights. Each insight is explained below. The following chapter explains the potential design opportunities in relation to each.

3.3.1 INSIGHT THEME 1: DUALITY OF GENDER

The dividing role of gender and social expectations related to being the ideal man or woman was the most common tension felt and mentioned by almost every respondent. The expectation of being physically beautiful was mentioned by every female respondent, including Leo/Lili. Bettie Blackheart brought up further gender expectations of women through being submissive in order to be liked and to be considered sexy, despite the bold pop icons like Madonna. The last respondent Orvokki, pushed this further to describe how men may even have a more narrow ideal to abide by, in that they must be strong emotionally all the time. Whereas women have the luxury of being both weak and strong when the situation permits. Additionally, she discusses the different forms of 'prostitution' women can engage in from the dating exchange of men's economic capital for women's erotic capital. With these various remarks, it is clear the division of two distinct genders has confined people in ways unnatural to their idea of self. The stress of abiding by these social norms is a stress that is felt daily.

3.3.2 INSIGHT THEME 2: DUALITY OF SELF

Similar to the previous insight, is daily tension of aspiring to live up to an ideal version of one's self according to religion or social norms instead of acting in accordance to one's actual desires and wishes. This contradictory behavior was evident in aspects of almost every respondent. Each seemed to be playing out a role in order to fulfill some social standard, whether it be the standards of gender or social/religious affiliation. One primary example is Daniel, the abstinent priest. He denies that he holds any feelings of sexual desire, abstains from sex and considers sex to be a negative act for himself and others. While he holds his opinions to be truth, from the interview process it seems as if he avoids his actual nature in effort to align himself with an idealized version of himself. Given his answers, he seems to struggle with a problematic sense of self, as he battles with an internal tug-of-war between his ideal self and natural feelings.

3.3.3 INSIGHT THEME 3: INTIMACY & LOVE

The importance of intimacy, and love – in the sense of agape, within sex was the most surprising insight. Almost all respondents touch on how at some level sex is about an experience with people, it is not an act or performance you can do with an object. Whether sexual pleasure is performed by one's self with a toy or experienced with another person, respondents expressed the importance of what I will call value intimacy. This is shown from Sophia's emotional connection and appreciation for the quality and passion behind Stephanie Dörr's dildos to Kevin's belief in sublime intimacy through marriage. While, at least most of the time, sex is never just sex, products are not mere objects and brands are much more than a marker. For an adult store to be successful in fostering a relevant and confidence building experience, it is key to make consumers feel a sense of value through a sense of closeness with a brand that is exudes passion, conviction and receptive qualities.

04

DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

4.1 FROM INSIGHTS TO DESIGN OPPORTUNITIES

Given the three common insight themes, the following section outlines opportunities for design to explore concepts from. These primarily focus on the concept design opportunities around the branding, visual communication and experience design of a pleasure boutique concept.

4.1.1 UNITY NOT DIVISION – GENDERS BLURRED

From the insight regarding the duality of gender, it is important to consider that even outside the adult store industry most products and stores are branded into the division of men and women. The design associated is often a matter of simple “gender-washing”: big and black for men followed by a “shrink it and pink it” version for women. (Brimberg 2011) Creating male and female versions for products and experiences is guaranteed to undermine or alienate one sex or both by undermining consumers for what they really are: people. This makes for poorly considered products and brands and a narrow outlook on gender and sexuality when considering the adult store industry.

From this perspective, there is an opportunity for a pleasure boutique to create a brand, overall visual communication and merchandising strategy that is gender neutral. The

products and the design of the service and overall brand would not divide or abide by traditional notions of what it is to be a man or woman.

This was opportunity area was primarily inspired by the respondent, Leo, also known as Lili. As someone who blurs the lines of gender within life, it would be wise for an adult store brand to consider a similar approach. Some of the most successful brands, like Apple, exude this 'radical neutrality', avoiding any gender casting to give the brand an enduring quality. (Brimberg 2011) Like sex and love, design has no gender.

4.1.2 POKING HOLES IN SOCIAL NORMS

Similar to the gender neutrality design approach, is the opportunity to design marketing and advertising strategies that poke holes in gender expectations. This could be continually refreshed with tensions that are felt present today and within pop culture. This could be a continuous design challenge for marketing and social media to take advantage of given various the endless political, religious and pop culture stories that relate to sexuality and self-confidence.

Poking holes at gender roles could also be done on a general campaign level. Given the tension felt by many respondents with the pressure to abide by cultural norms beyond gender, there is a large opportunity to flip these norms on their heads. Benchmarks of this include the success of Old Spice's 'The Man your Man Could Smell Like' campaign and Dr. Pepper Ten's 'Mountain Man' campaign. Both campaigns poke fun at "the lack of 'true' masculinity as well as women's stereotypical romantic desires." (Brimberg 2011) Both campaigns poke holes in the social norms of gender, as a result they are enjoyed by both genders. There is much room to explore this area further in regards to sexual norms and expectations.

4.1.3 BOYS WILL BE GIRLS WILL BE BOYS – CHANGING NATURES

Similar to the idea of neutrality in communication, is to continually understand that the traditional ideas of femininity and masculinity are changing. Despite taking a neutral approach, the changing nature of what it means to be masculine or feminine could open up new avenues for services within adult stores. A recent example of this would be the opening of the first female masturbation bar in Tokyo, Love Joule. No longer are women as shy and private about their sexual desires. Much like a traditional gentleman's club, Love Joule offers women a chance to come together, explore and even boast about their latest sexual adventures. Exploring other social community building experiences and educational services beyond the Love Joule approach would be a key opportunity area to open up further service design innovations related to the initial pleasure boutique concept.

4.1.4 SUBLIME TRANSFORMATION

Lastly, and most complicated and controversial, would be the unique opportunity area to utilize the shared visual communication of what has, for most of history, been against sexual exploration: religion.

To explain, when looking back at all my respondents the interviewees who seemed to be most consistently happy and confident in their professional and private lives had one simple thing in common: a beautiful sense of assurance. A few, completely unconcerned with

abiding by social expectations. These respondents seemed to share an innate sense of bravery or courage to be themselves. They were not conflicted daily, or as often about who their partners, family or society wants them to be. This admirable demeanor seemed to radiate positive effects within all aspects of their life. There was a sense of freedom to be and do what gave them pleasure; pleasure of all types. While no life is free from feelings of despair or suffering, these few respondents seemed to have little conflict in their life. This authentic living seemed to bring them into further happiness that led to being surrounded by other happy, like-minded people within positive and confidence reinforcing environments that evoked joy within their life. They looked back on their life with many memories - memory which is a good portion of enjoying and experiencing pleasure.

More interesting, is how these happier and more confident respondents come from very different cultural, political and religious backgrounds. Although coming from different places they shared a similar way of life - one that brought them happiness and confidence. Within this cultural and psychographic difference was this insight opportunity: the message is the same no matter where it comes from. From devout Christians to atheists, there were polar opposite respondents carrying out a very similar way of life. From this research insight, there is an interesting opportunity to use what has long been used against sexuality, religion. Looking back on the respondents that considered themselves Christian, atheist, partially Buddhist or merely interested in Tantra, they all come from very different religious factions yet their life purpose and intent was still coming from a very similar place.

For example, when recalling the interviewee, Kevin, he described his life purpose as achieving a state of renewed purity through being reborn. Reaching this state of rebirth could happen only through living a life where you exude agape love, the highest form of a Christian (agape love: distinct from erotic or emotional affection). Similarly, there are other respondents of different religious backgrounds desiring a sense of connection and intimacy within their relationships, sexual or not, and seem to regard intimacy in a similar sense to agape love, as the highest form of connection. Whether it is called love, pleasure or intimacy in order to reach a state of purity, rebirth or sublime state, the message is the same: people want a sense of intimacy to feel connected and affirmed. Ideally, this would be a sense of intimacy that is agape in nature - a love without needing or want. A connection that is mutually respectful and free, transcending any expectation or form.

Given this, there is an opportunity for a brand and its communication to utilize shared religious elements that would visually embody this free sense of agape love or intimacy that is so desired among users. Whether it is a sense of closeness to the product maker, as in the case of Sophia, or a sense of consecrated intimacy through marriage, as in the case with Kevin, people are looking for value through a relationship that goes beyond a physical give and take. In people so different there are similarities. The same is true of religion. While religion has done quite a lot to suppress sexuality there are aspects shared by many different religions that could help challenge existing notions of adult stores. From Tantra, Buddhism to Christianity their philosophies share the idea of transcending form to reach a state of purity or enlightenment that is beyond form - or gender roles and social norms. Elements from these religious philosophies could be used within the brand identity and communication as a means to alleviate the cultural tensions felt in regards to gender and sexuality.

4.2 FUTURE PROSPECTS AND DISCUSSION

Through the development of this research process and these identified areas of opportunity, the initial concept of V Boutique has changed drastically and now has even greater potential to resonate and inspire sexual positivity, confidence and exploration. It has the potential to become the first design centric adult store that communicates a genuine approach to

sexuality, pleasure and relationships.

When viewing people as users within this industry there is first the recognition that much fear and shame still exist as users avoid or navigate through the adult store market. This shame and fear is the vulnerability users feel within the majority of adult store experiences. Researcher Brenè Brown, would describe fear within relationships as a fear of being disconnected or unworthiness. (Brown 2012,) The fruition of V Boutique would ideally alleviate this feeling of vulnerability and this fear of being disconnected through a brand and experience design that connects users as people. Overall, given the findings, there is much potential to democratize and further serve people as an unmet consumer base in an otherwise unbalanced industry where design, and intimacy, has yet to flourish.

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APPENDIX

INTERVIEWEE RELEASE FORM THESIS PROJECT

Date : 00.00.0000
Kathleen Pekkola
Aalto University
IDBM Masters Program

I, _____, permit Kathleen Pekkola to use all information collected during our interview as research data for use within her master's thesis document and presentations. In addition to the information discussed in our interview, I permit Kathleen Pekkola to use the following personal information within her thesis documents and presentations by signing my initials below.

_____ I permit the use of my legal and personal names.

_____ I permit the use of photos of myself taken within the interview.

_____ I permit the use of video of myself taken within the interview.

_____ I permit the use of audio recording during the interview.

I understand and acknowledge all data discussed and items above are available for public knowledge.

SIGNATURE _____

DATE _____

PRINTED NAME _____

DISCUSSION GUIDE

SAMPLE

PURPOSE

- _ explore tensions around sexuality
- _ explore relationship between sexuality and self-confidence
- _ explore insights into creating a better adult store experience in-store & online

REMEMBER

- _ ask "WHY?"
- _ ask for stories
- _ audio / photos /video
- _ release form
- _ one question at a time
- _ allow for silence
- _ inspiration over data
- _ adapt to language

INTRODUCTION

(communicated verbally more informally at each interview)

05 MINUTES

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this discussion. To explain the purpose of this interview again before we begin:

Earlier this year I created a business plan for a pleasure boutique/adult store while studying at Aalto University. I decided to test the desirability of this concept within my master's thesis by developing and conducting qualitative consumer research. I'm interviewing a range of different people regarding their lifestyle, opinions, attitudes and behavior towards sexuality, self confidence and adult store/product experiences.

I'm meeting with a wide range of different individuals to understand the ways they live their life, make decisions and choices. There are no right or wrong answers in this interview. I'm genuinely interested in hearing about you, your opinions and stories. Hearing what you have to say will help to provide me with insights and inspiration.

In addition to taking notes while we discuss, I would like to record this session, in order to refer to our discussion later. I would also like to take photographs throughout the session, as a visual form of note taking and to better communicate my findings. These images and recordings may be used for my thesis or they may be kept confidential, if you prefer. I have a release form explaining the use of these materials in more detail.

Please read the release form and sign the bottom of the page to consent to me utilizing the data gained from this interview for my thesis project. We can discuss this permission and use again once our discussion has finished.

I hope you find this experience enjoyable rather than intrusive but if, at any time, you feel uncomfortable with a question or topic, please feel free to let me know. I am also happy to share a brief of my notes after the interview if you desire and my thesis once completed.

BACKGROUND & LIFESTYLE

20 MINUTES

General guideline of questions tailored to interviewee and the natural flow of discussion.

No specific order. Not all questions are asked or included within each interview

Most questions followed with the questions why?, how?, tell me about a time...

- _ How about we start with you telling me about your yourself?
- _ What is a typical day like for you?
- _ Are you working or studying?
- _ What else do you do in your freetime?
- _ How did you decide to pursue a (career/hobby/interest) of _____ ?
(ie: pole dancing, dominatrix, bondage artist, priesthood, Islam)
- _ Does your career/interest/hobby effect your work or studies in any way?
- _ Tell me about your family and friend growing up.
- _ What role do they think they played into you pursuing _____.

SELF CONFIDENCE & X

20 MINUTES

- Do you think _____ builds your sense of self confidence? How? Why?
- Tell me about the first time / last time you thought this helped you feel good about yourself?
- What has been the best moment for you when doing/practicing _____ ?
- How do you friends and family feel about you doing/practicing _____ ?
- Who are your idols or people you respect? Why?
- When was your first introduction/encounter to this person(s)?

SEXUALILTY & X

20 MINUTES

- _ How do you think _____ effects your sexuality?
- _ What role does sexuality play in your life?
- _ How would you describe yourself and life in regards to sexuality?
- _ How has it changed through your life? Why & why? (draw graph)
- _ When was your first experience with visiting an adult store? online or in-store?

BENCHMARKING IN-STORE + LINE BLURRING + MAPPING

15 MINUTES

- _ Looking at these images are there aspects you love or hate?
- _ Do any of these locations remind you of positive or negative service experiences?
- _ What do you think of the appearance? (color, materials, lighting etc.)
- _ Why would you or wouldn't you go into this location?
- _ Is there anything you would add to this experience?
(Draw it out. Give unrelated industry image examples.)
- _ What was your best shopping experience? / What was your worst?
- _ Where do you think the best location for an adult store in Helsinki would be?

BENCHMARKING ONLINE + LINE BLURING

15 MINUTES

- _ What adults stores have you visited online?
(show and demonstrate shopping experience)
- _ What websites do you visit often? What online stores do you shop and/or like?
- _ What do you love or hate about the websites/online stores you use most?
- _ Looking at these websites which ones are most appealing?
(showing a range of print outs and online adult stores)
- _ Is there anything you would add to this experience? (draw it out.)
- _ What is the best online experience you've had?
- _ What is the worst online shopping experience you've had?

IMAGE ASSOCIATION /// THE FEELING**10 MINUTES**

- _ What do you think about these images?
- _ Why do you dislike or love the image?
- _ Can you think of another image or piece of artwork that you'd like better?
- _ If an image were to be used in an advertisement, what feelings do you think it should evoke? (show words / draw out)
- _ What would the ad include?

WRAP UP**05 MINUTES**

- _ Discussion of confidentiality agreement
- _ Thank you and copy of agreement given
- _ Memo of interview notes offered
- _ Contact information delivered again with the inquiry of follow up questions
- _ Thesis completion date mentioned with plans to share final thesis document

TOTAL TIME**APPROX. 110 MINUTES**

CREATIVE KIT



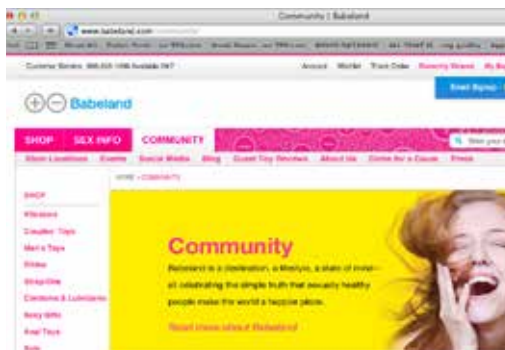
BENCHMARKS: IN-STORE

Explore thoughts and feelings by showing a range of in-store benchmarks from Keltainen Ruusu to the NYC Sex Museum. Discuss opinions and feelings regarding appearance, materials, layout, customer service. This can also evoke memories of past experience. Discuss what they loved and hated.



LINE BLURRING: IN-STORE

Push ideas by exploring a range of in-store benchmarks of different unrelated services: bars, hotels, lounges, strip clubs, lingerie stores, electronic stores, airlines, friends' apartments etc.



BENCHMARKS - WEBSITES

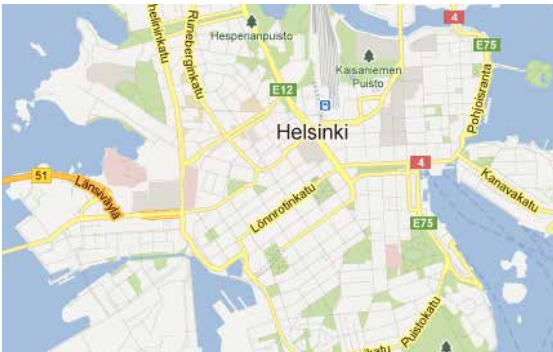
Explore opinions and experiences within the context of on-line adult store services by showing a range of different adult store websites - printed examples and online. Watch interviewees explore websites. Discuss what they love and hate and what sites they have used in the past. Ask for past experiences.



LINE BLURRING - WEBSITES

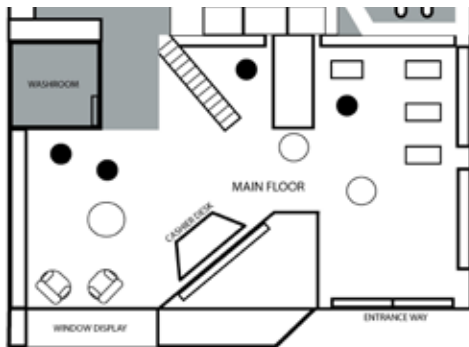
Further ideas and evoke other feelings and experiences by presenting different online services unrelated to adult stores: books, movies, electronics, clothes etc. What sources do they love or hate that they frequent or have used in the past?

CREATIVE KIT



MAPPING

Which pleasure boutiques have they visited within Helsinki? Why and how often did they go there? Where would they see a pleasure boutique placed within Helsinki? Have each person highlight streets and/or a general area that would be the best placement. Ask them to explain why.



FLOOR PLAN + SERVICES

Review the initial floorplan for V Boutique. Walk them through the intend experience and ask for their opinions. What past experiences did they love or hate that could be applied? Draw out a series of revised experience.



IMAGE ASSOCIATION - THE FEELING

Review the initial floorplan for V Boutique. Walk them through the intend experience and ask for their opinions. What past experiences did they love or hate that could be applied? Draw out a series of revised experience.

DEBRIEF

SAMPLE

ABOUT

Leo Chen, 38, Finnish, pole dancer
Pansexual, transgender / cross dresser
In an open relationship, semi-swinger, attends group sex/swinger aka fetish parties

Owns about 25-30 adult products
Frequents adult stores/online 4 times a year, 8-10 times a year if including downloads.
Avid pole dancer, highly sexual, knowledgeable about adult stores within Finland, products, sexual practices, sexuality/gender identity.

Works in as a concept designer in a IT consulting firm.

EMOTIONAL PROFILE / BEHAVIORS

Engages in hobbies like yoga and pole dancing where women make up the majority.
Avoid social interactions with males, finds it hard to relate
Frequented an adult store called Harness because it was more of an authentic sub-culture experience and atmosphere that related to the S&M community he related to
Now shops online because it Harness 'sold out' into a mass mall approach, other stores don't have the same sense of community or that great of selection.

MOTIVATIONS / NEEDS

ATTENTION

Validation and admiration from women, as the only male pole dancer in the group.

COMMUNITY

Supportive community that he can relate to. Also helps to expand his sexual community network.

IDENTITY EXPRESSION

A way to perform artistically and almost as another person. He's allowed to do a more female activity, wear make up and little masculine clothing. Almost the middle ground between Leo and 'Lily'.

STORE EXPERIENCE

No adequate adult store in Helsinki. Goes online mostly unless it's convenient at the time. There is no place for him that makes him feel like he belongs. The products he buys are more about who he's experiencing the product with.

INSTORE SALES EXPERIENCE

"Most of the time I think I know more and have tried more than the sales person."
Wants an expert that can quickly and easily tell him what is new/worth trying for X,Y, Z
Desires an expert sales person that is warm, welcoming/friendly "there-if-you-need-her", preferred the presence of a woman sales person.

DEBRIEF

SAMPLE

STORE EXPERIENCE

CATERED FOR ME (small/authentic)

liked SinCity before it became an “adult mall” for the masses. It was originally called Harness and was a small place catering more towards the S&M subculture. “It felt more real, more authentic to me and the people that went there. Now they’ve gone bankrupt and all that is left is Keltainen Ruusu which is for old dirty straight men in trenchcoats. Not for me other than the convenience of buying products I need...and that I can and have done online.”

SURPRISING FACTORS

He has a second self – Lily, who is happier, more carefree, easygoing, approachable and fun than Leo.

HOW MIGHT WE’S / OPPORTUNITIES

HMW create a pleasure boutique that blurs the gender divide into something positive?

HMW create a pleasure boutique brand that encourages people to be themselves, whatever that might be?

HMW create a pleasure boutique into a community through an online presence?

HMW create clean yet human and non-prudish yet sophisticated adult store experience through product offering/communication?

HMW combine the cleanness and lightness of retail/museums with the natural human aspects?

HMW might are sales experts out-shock or expert customers? HMW do this online?

IDEAS

Doing & Being

- Less sterile Apple + brighter/whiter and more colourful adult store
- A place where you can freely hangout and feel like you belong there
- Free to explore, ask questions and be inspired by products and staff
- Facilitate exploration through friendly sales staff.

They should be experts like the genius bar but not as sterile and technical. “human expert”

- Light, naturally bright lighting/windows, natural materials – not too sterile, warm and human.

- “Service would be about offering what I’m looking for...but going beyond that to tell me something new or interesting from an expert opinion. I may know everything and more but the sales person should be the expert to quickly tell /show me something. You know, shock or wow me. That is a rare thing!”

DEBRIEF

SAMPLE

IDEAS

INSTORE

_ offer pornography, not just an "erotic library" - "It seems prudish to only offer 'sexually expressive' forms of art.

ONLINE

_ offer two websites at the start of the homepage...one that is more 'wink-wink'/prudishly sophisticated and another where you can explore deeper. "sexuality is so complex and people want so many different things it is hard to say what is right...even for one person at all times".

BLOG

_ interview interesting people related to sexuality, products
- create a sense of community

No barriers to exploration

- You are allowed and encouraged to explore beyond the expected/prude offering of Kiki DM/Agent Provocateur for example.

Being personal, open/nonjudgemental, being authentic and unique, sense of community

- Being able to find what he's looking for, enjoying the process but also experiencing something new through expert opinions/offering

